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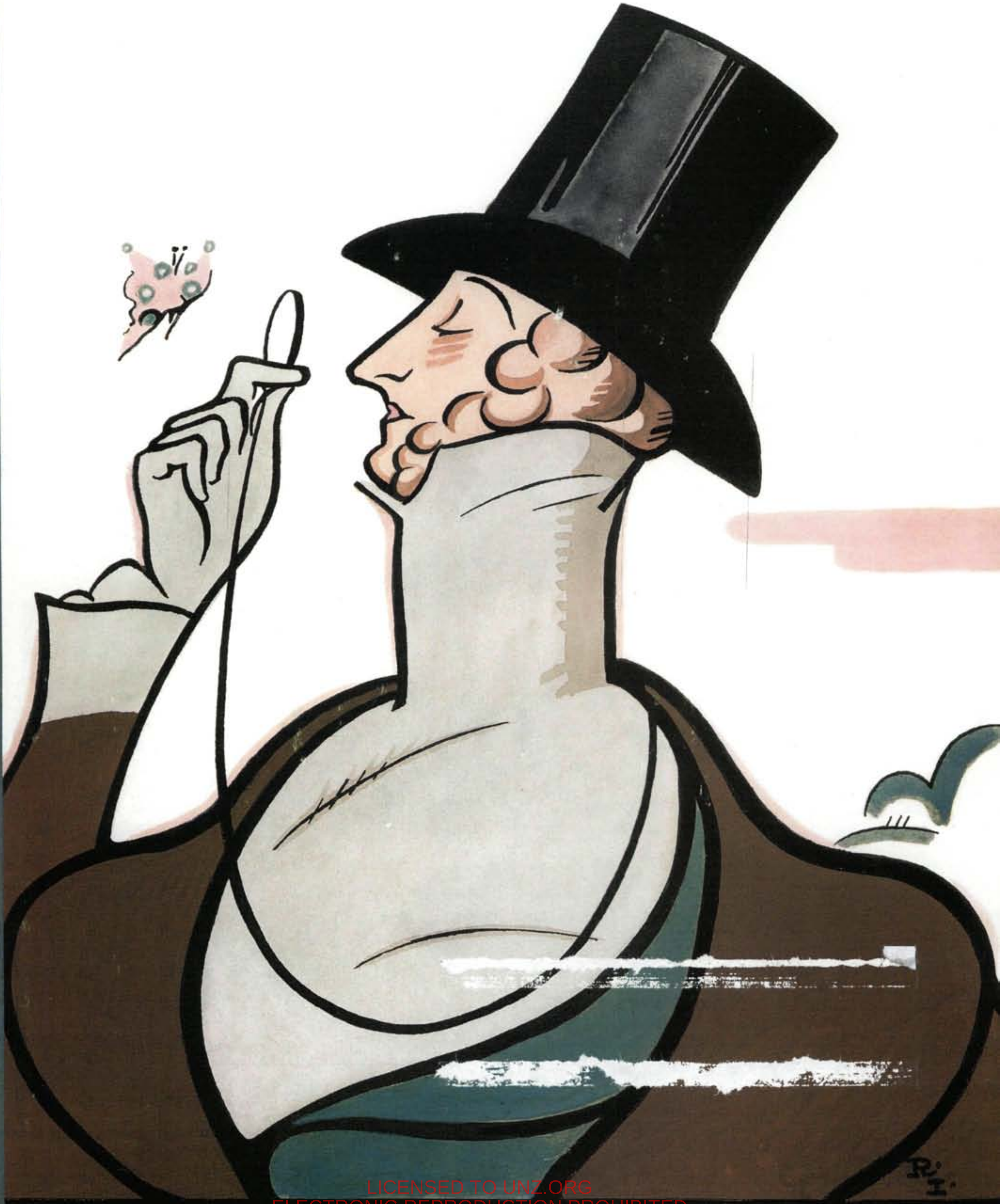

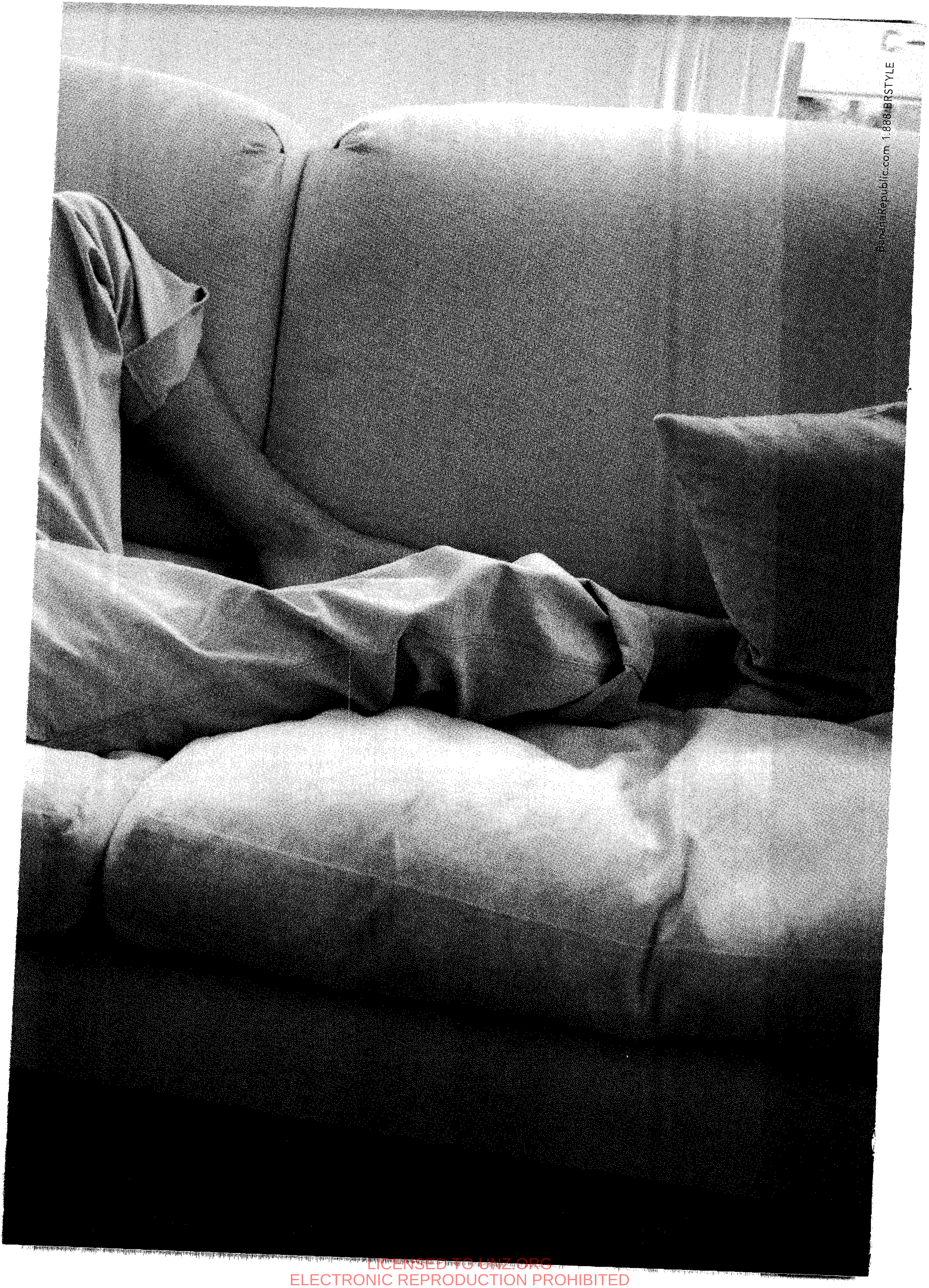
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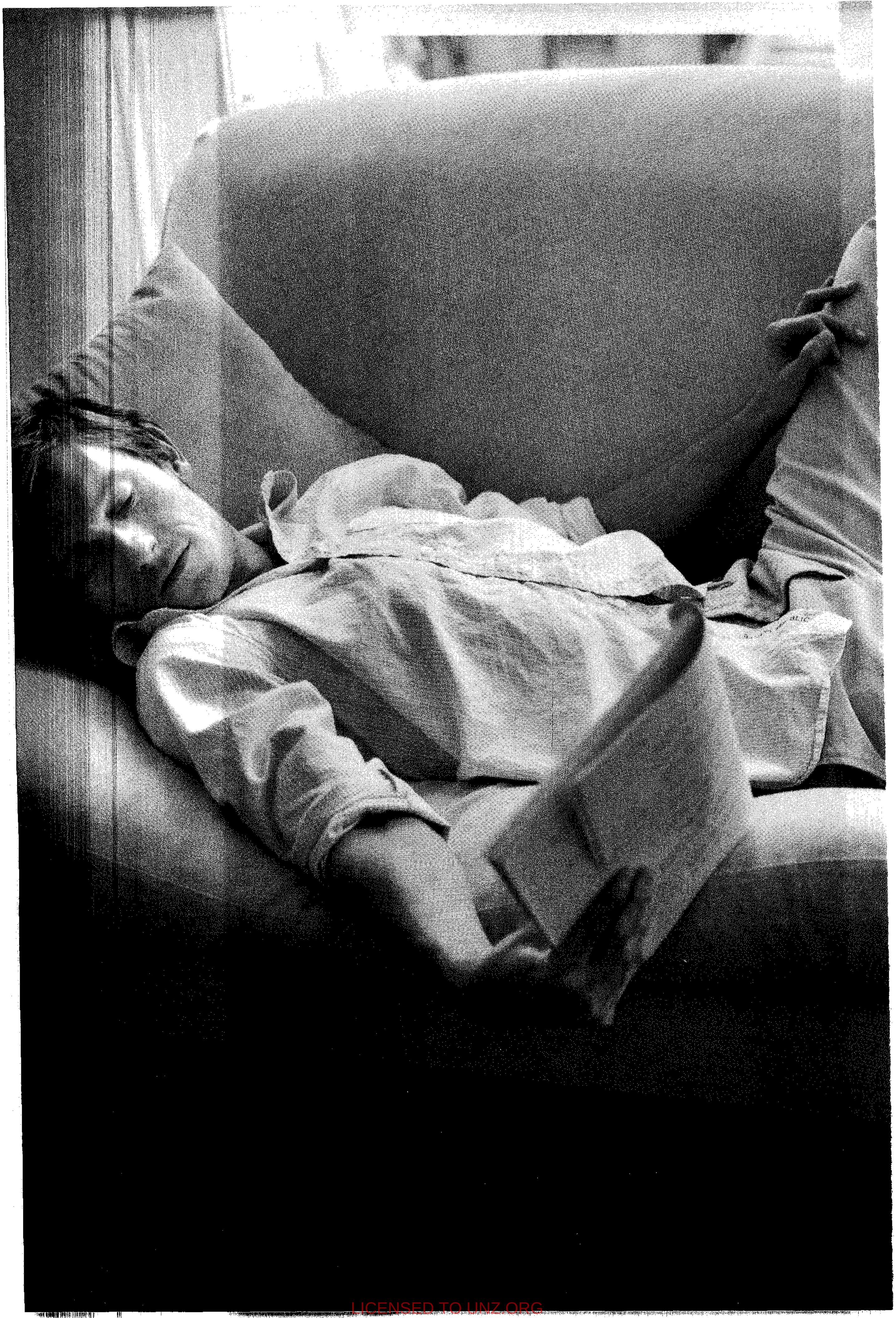

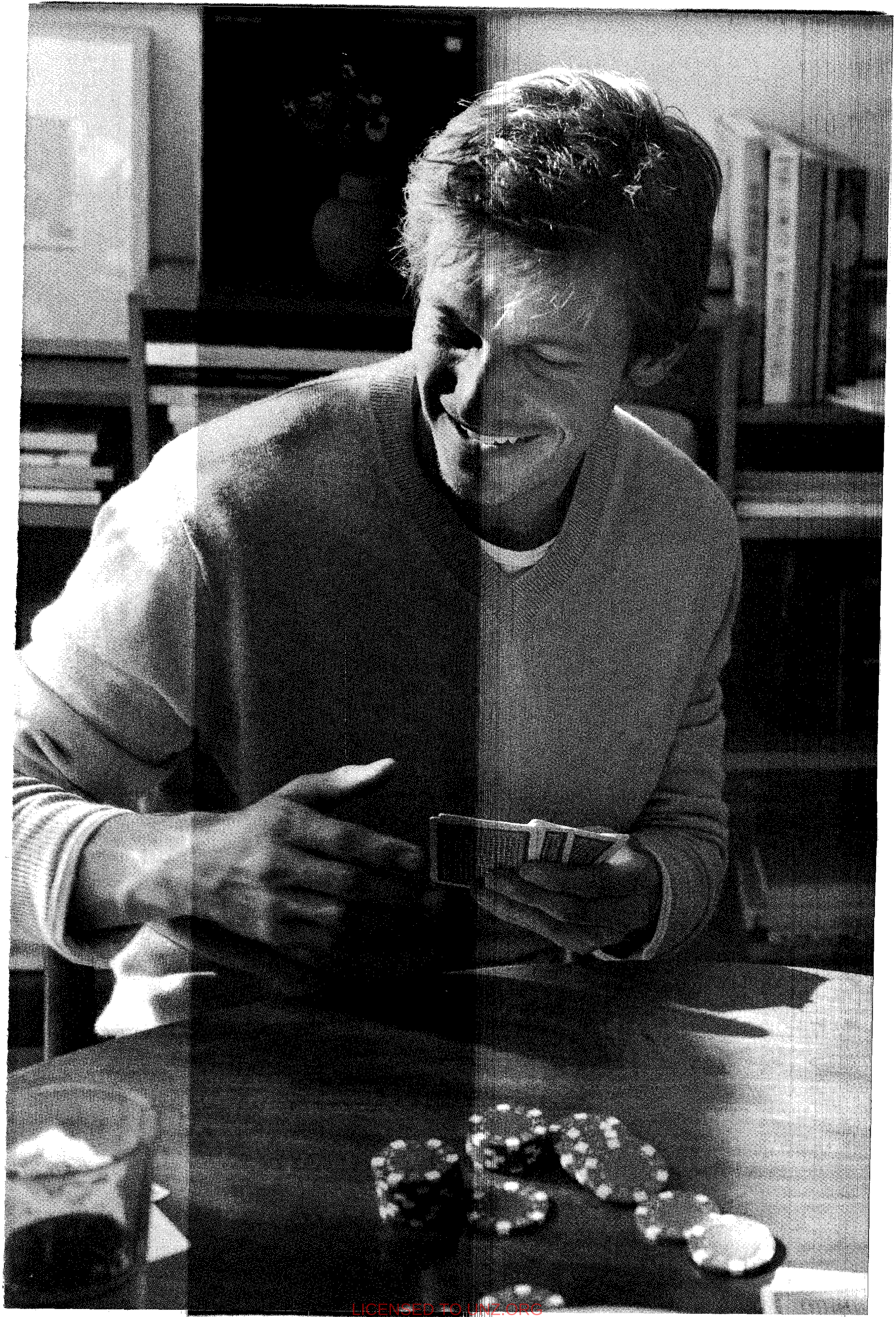

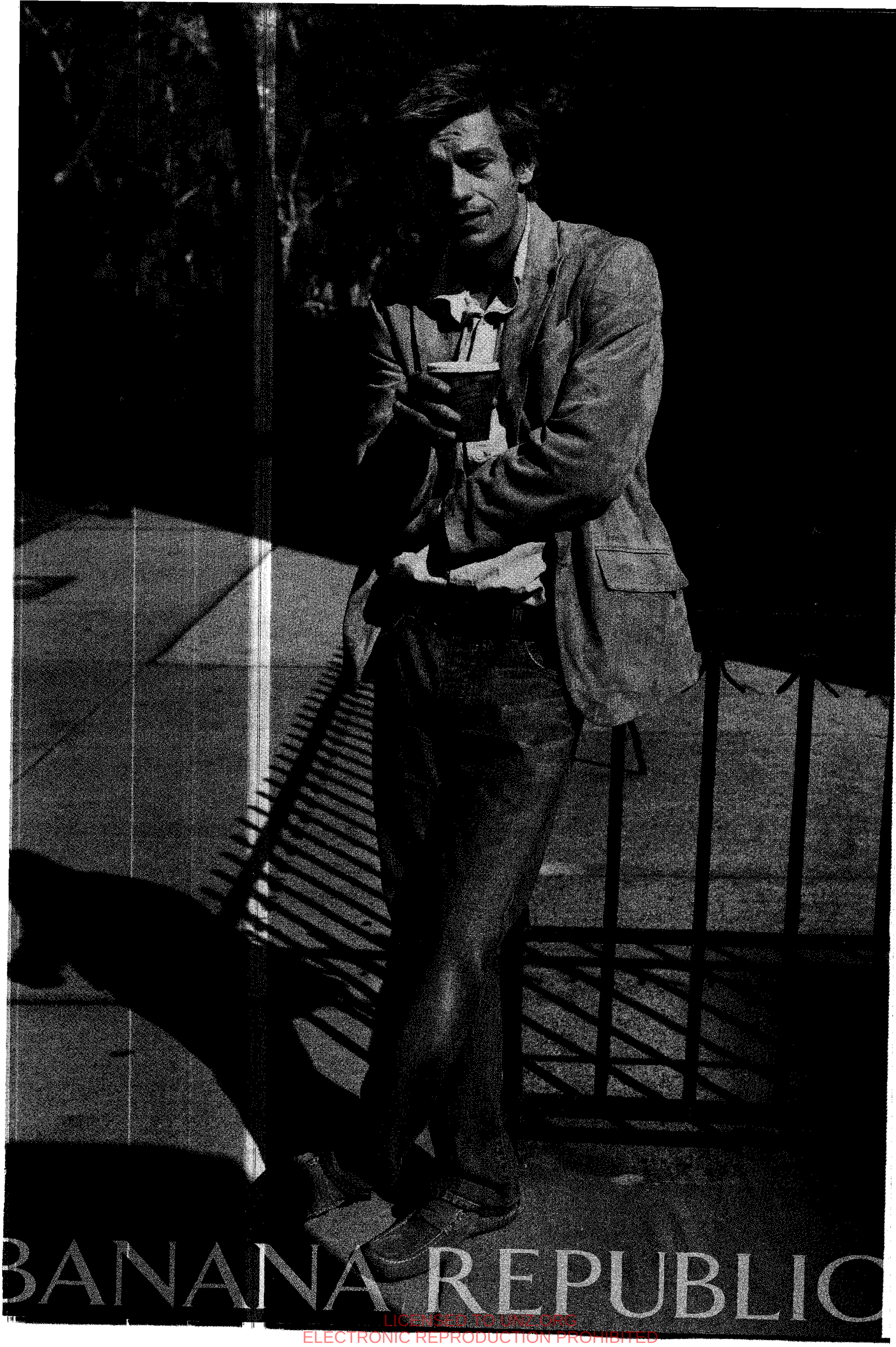
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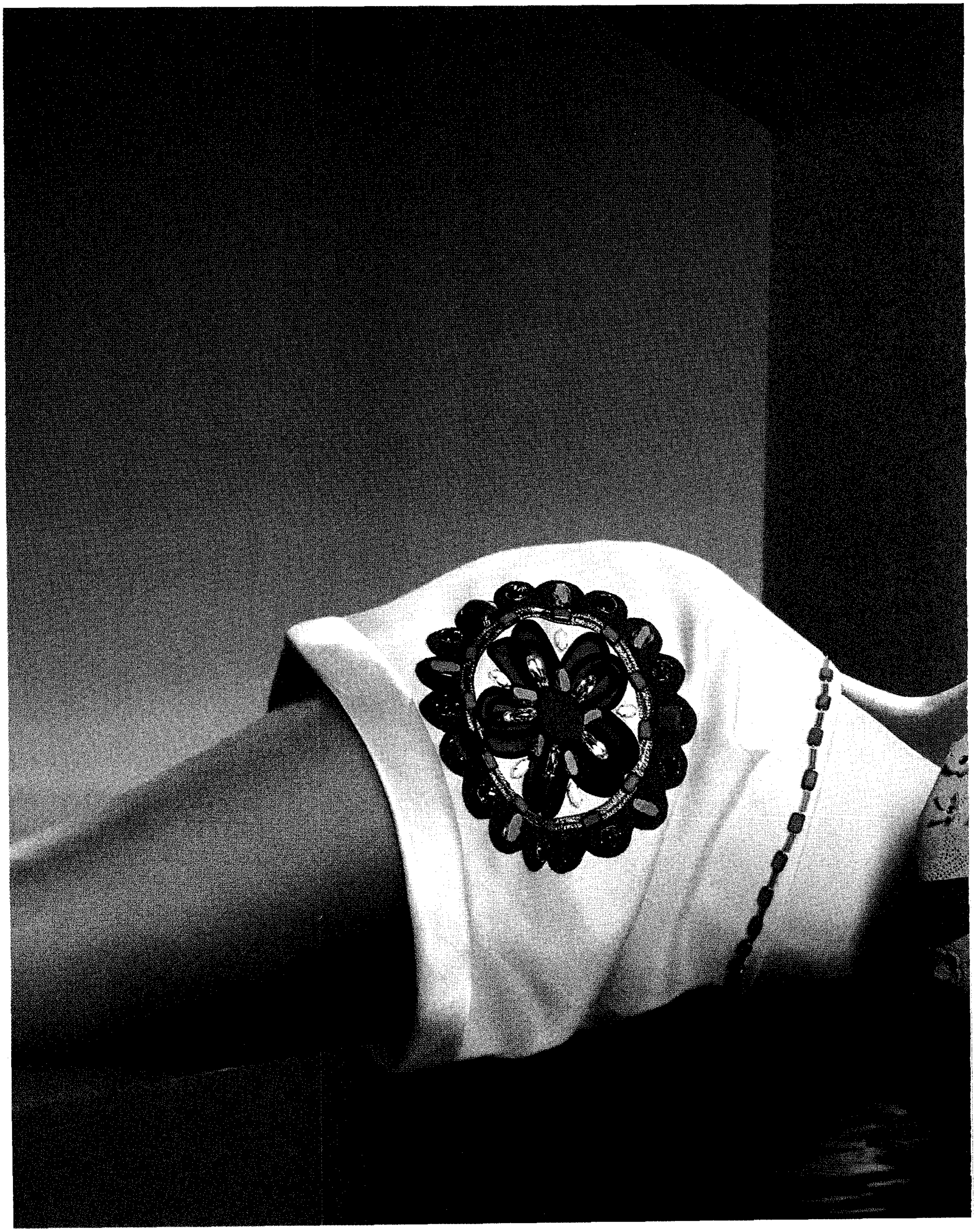

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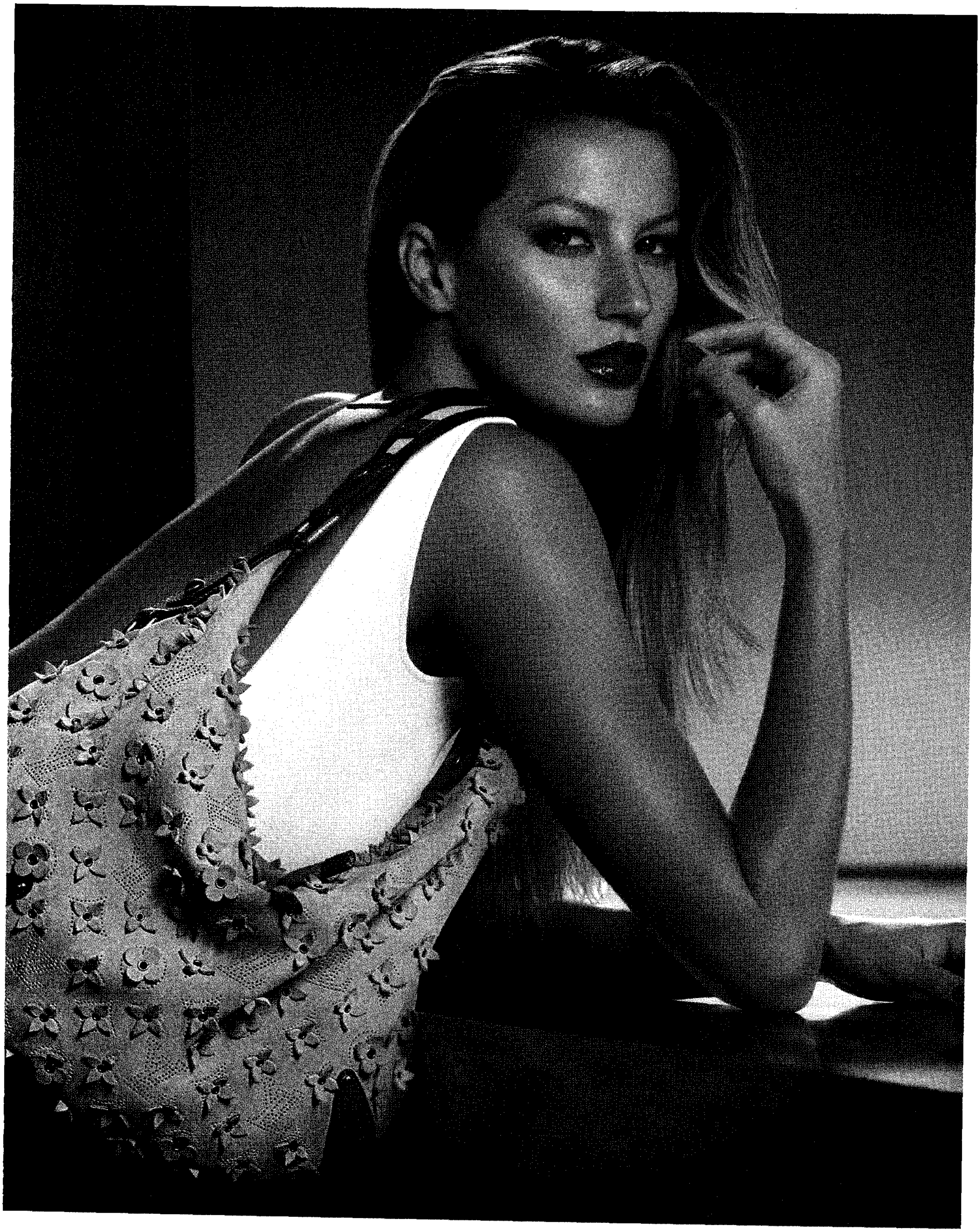

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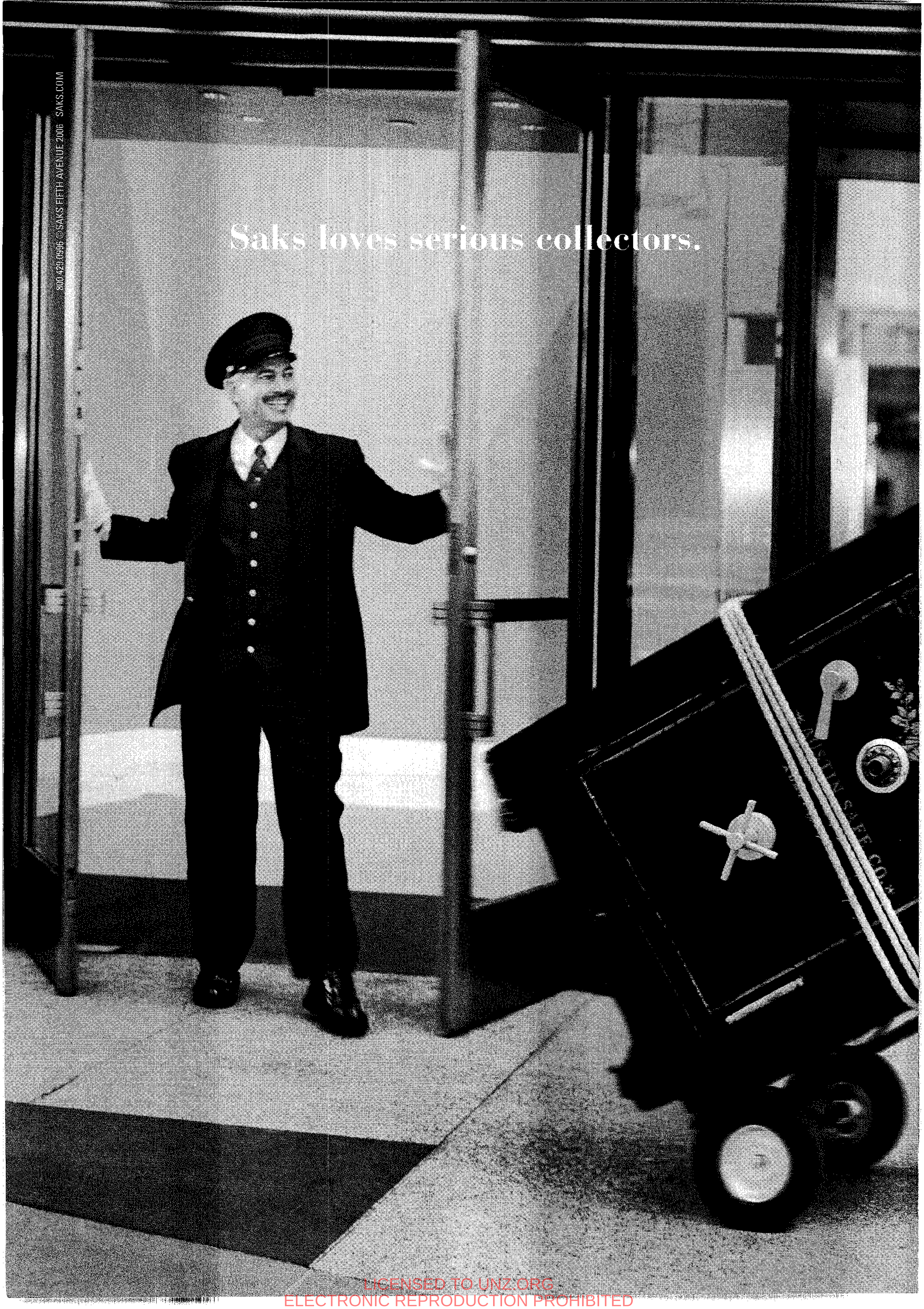
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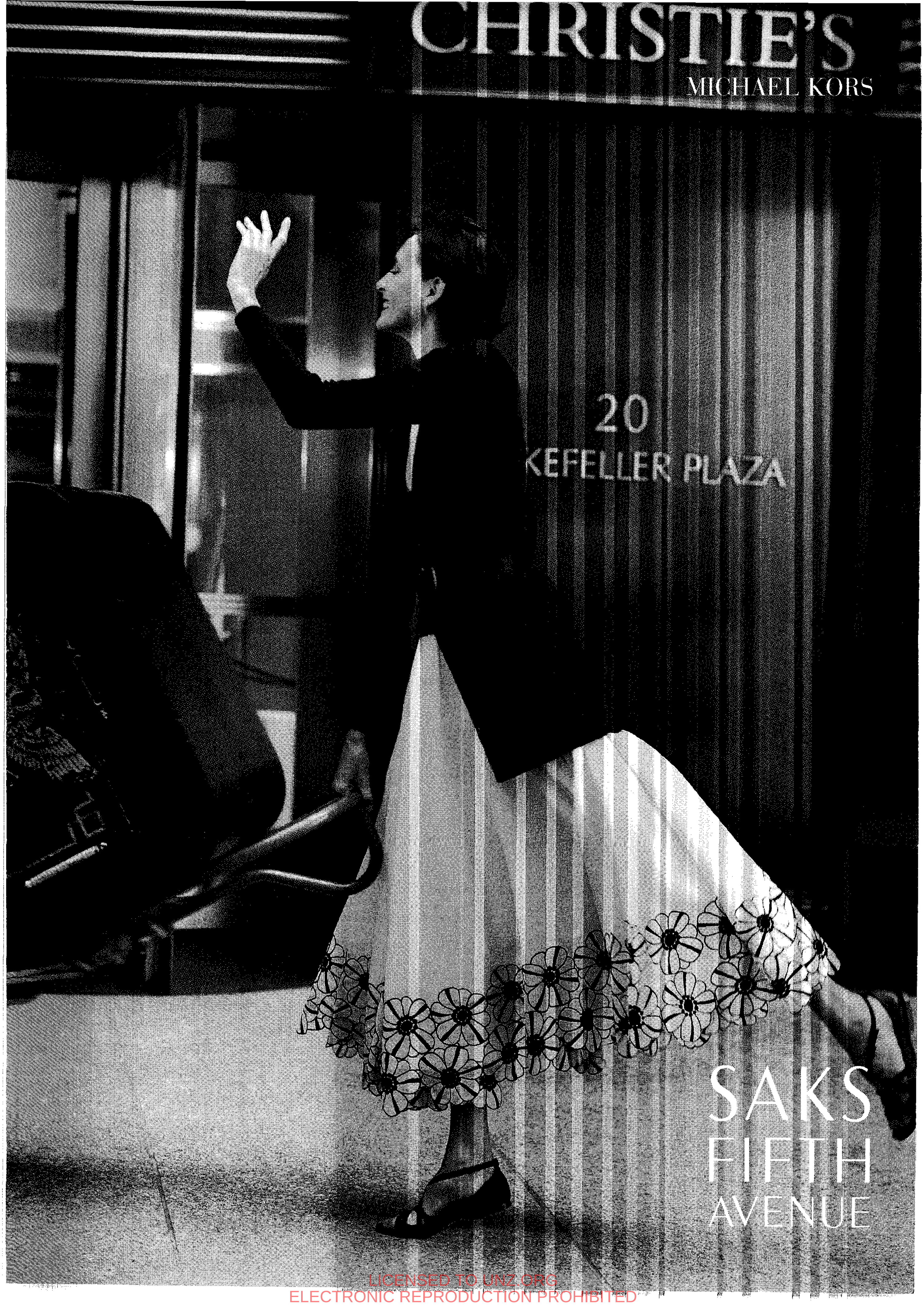
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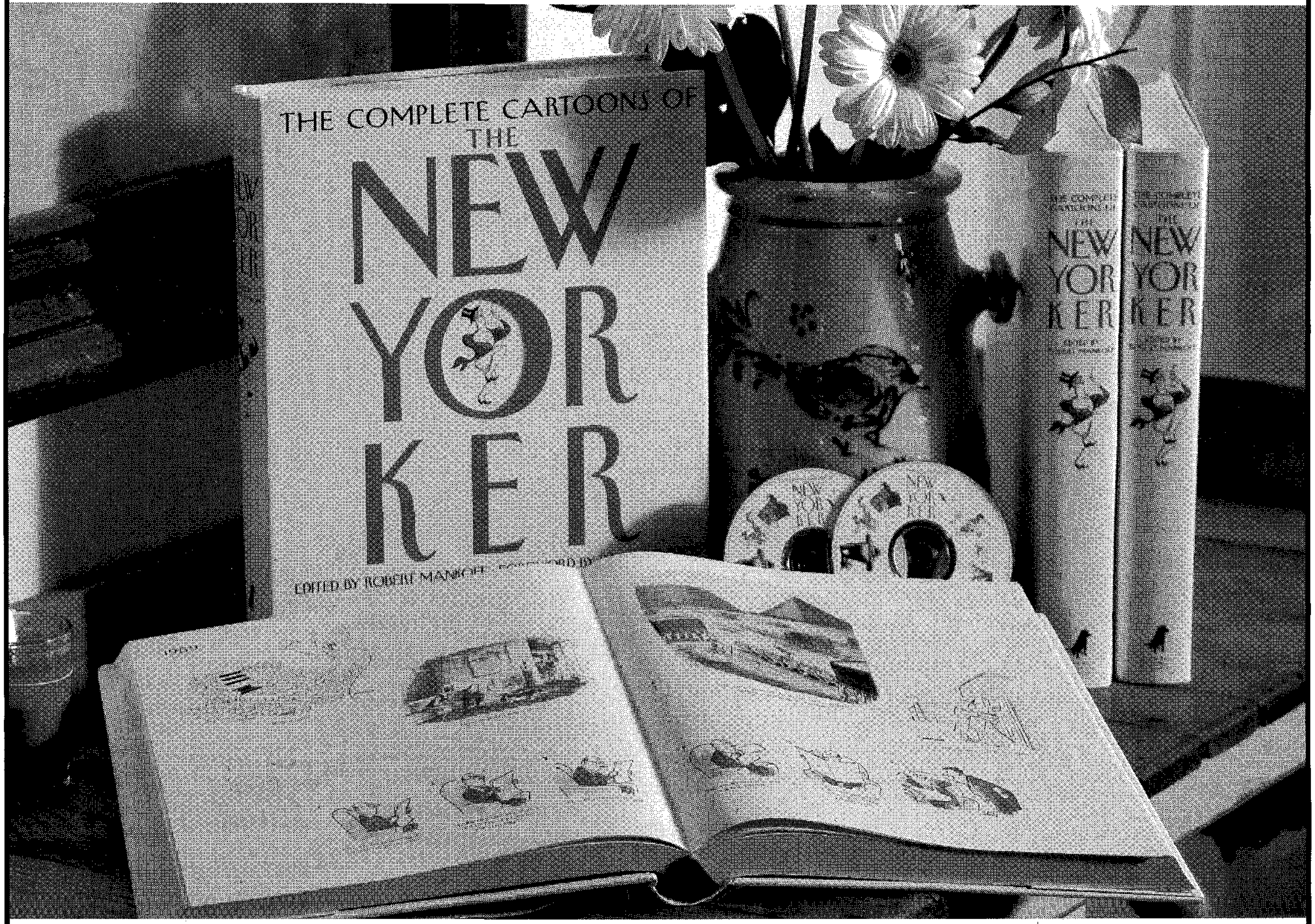
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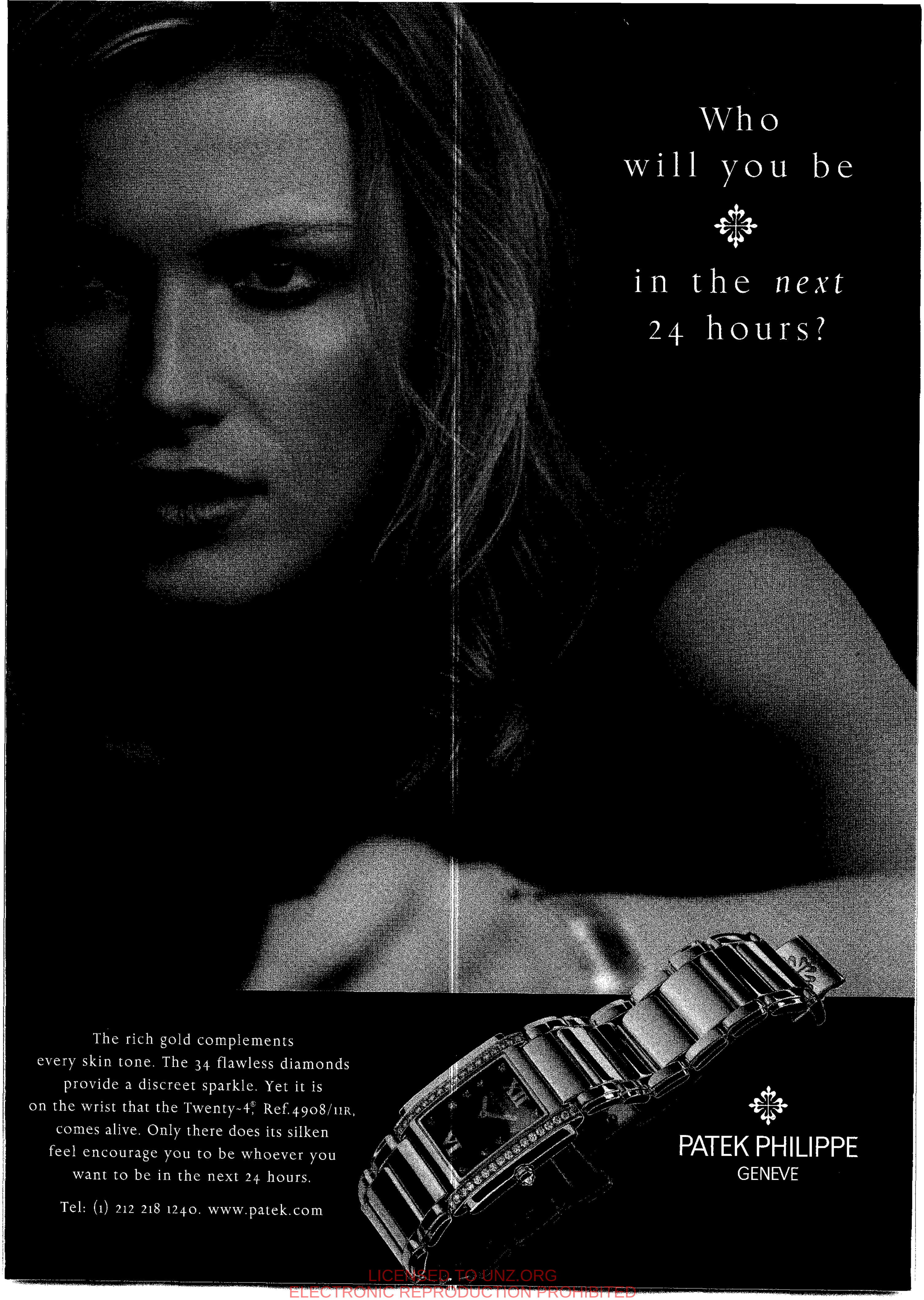
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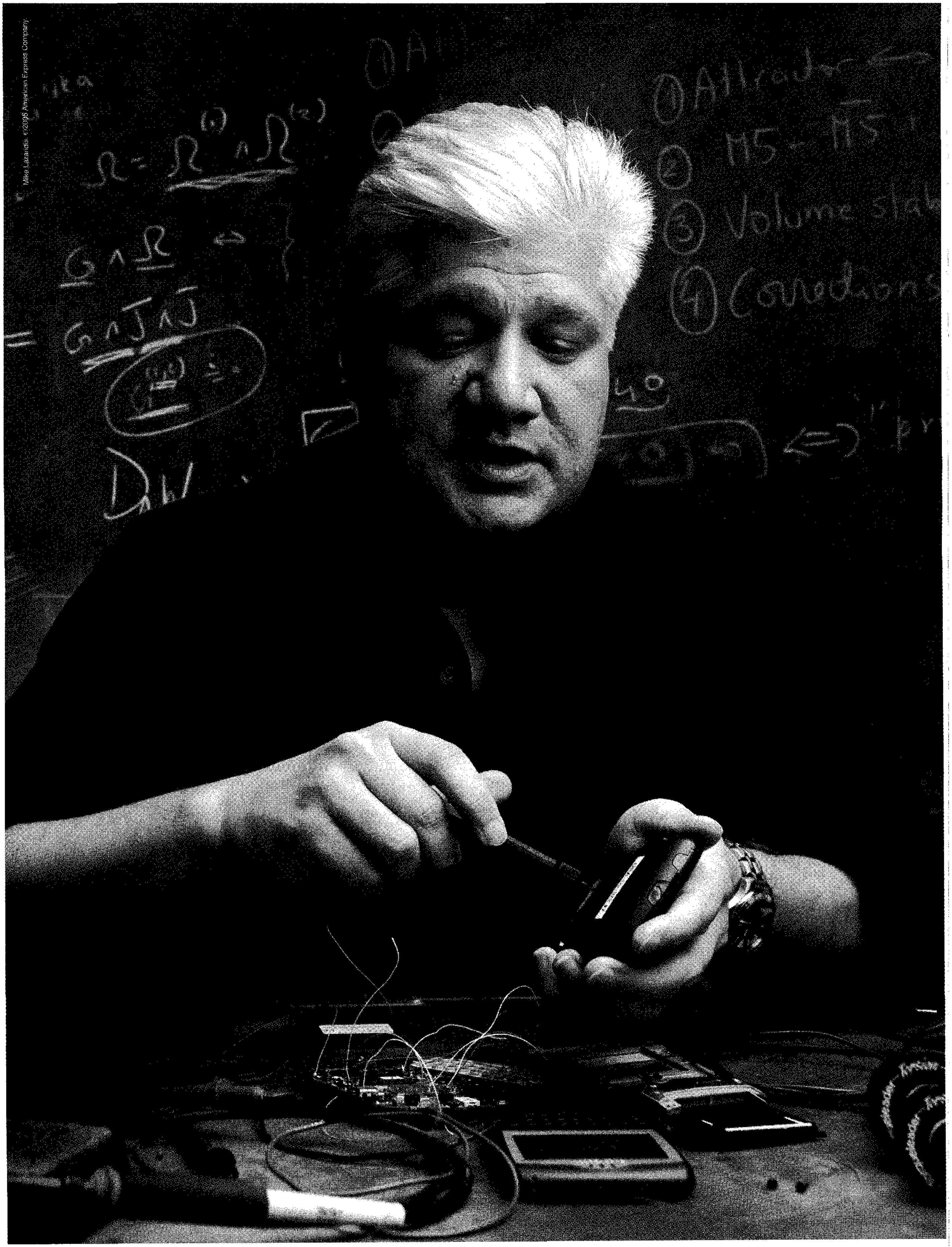

① Attractor
② M5 = M5
③ Volume stab
④ Corrections

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My name is Mike Lazaridis
childhood ambition was to change the world.
fondest memory is the image of my children's smiling faces.
soundtrack is laughter.
retreat is reading.
wildest dream is to unlock the secrets of the universe.
proudest moment the opening day gala at Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics.
biggest challenge is spending more time with my family.
alarm clock is my BlackBerry.
perfect day is spent at the cottage with my family.
first job during University was designing microcode
indulgence is watching movies with my lovely wife.
last purchase was 4 iPod Nanos, one for each member of the family.
favorite movie is Primer.
inspiration is the power of imagination.
My life is about making ideas happen
My card is American Express

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THE ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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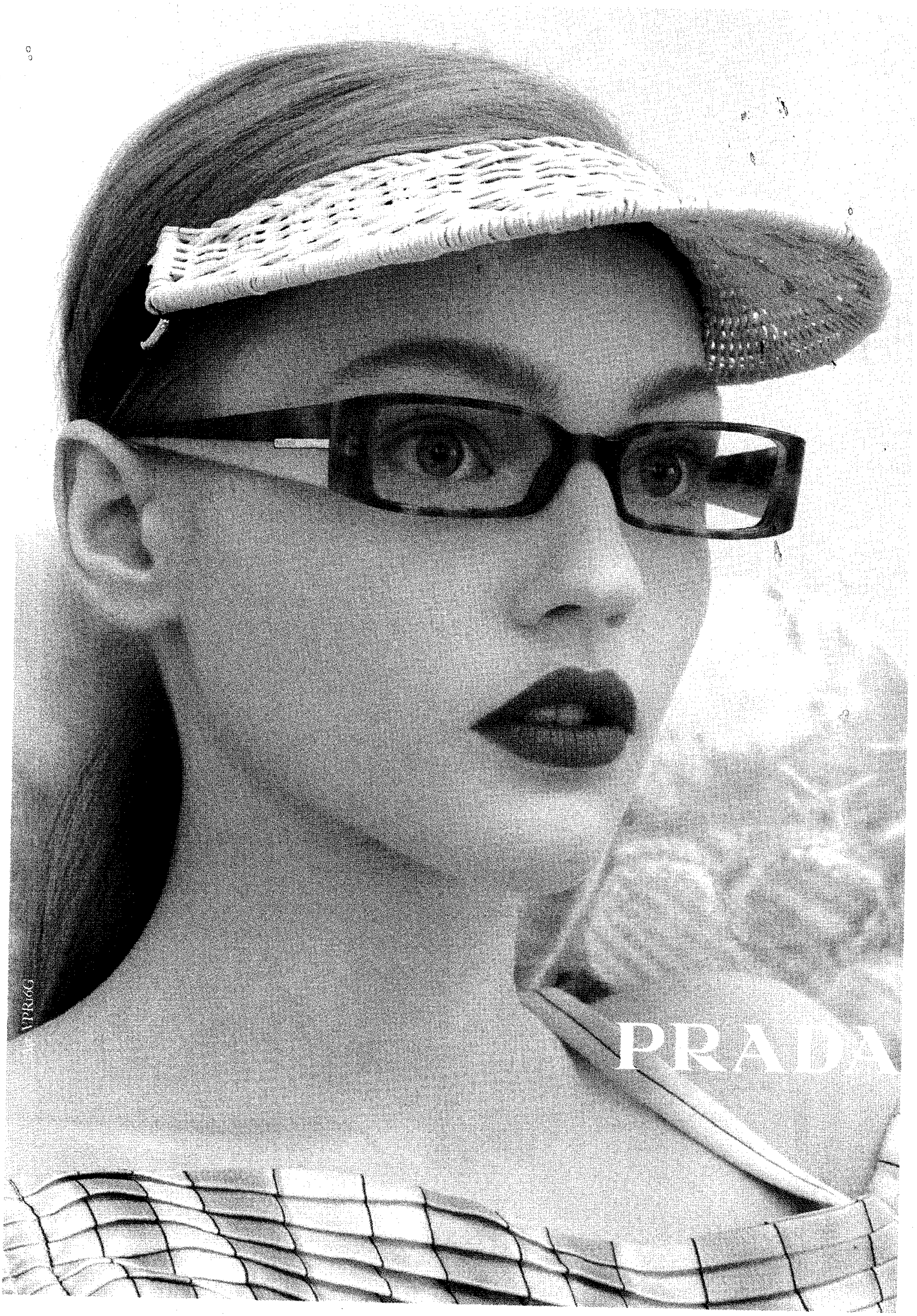

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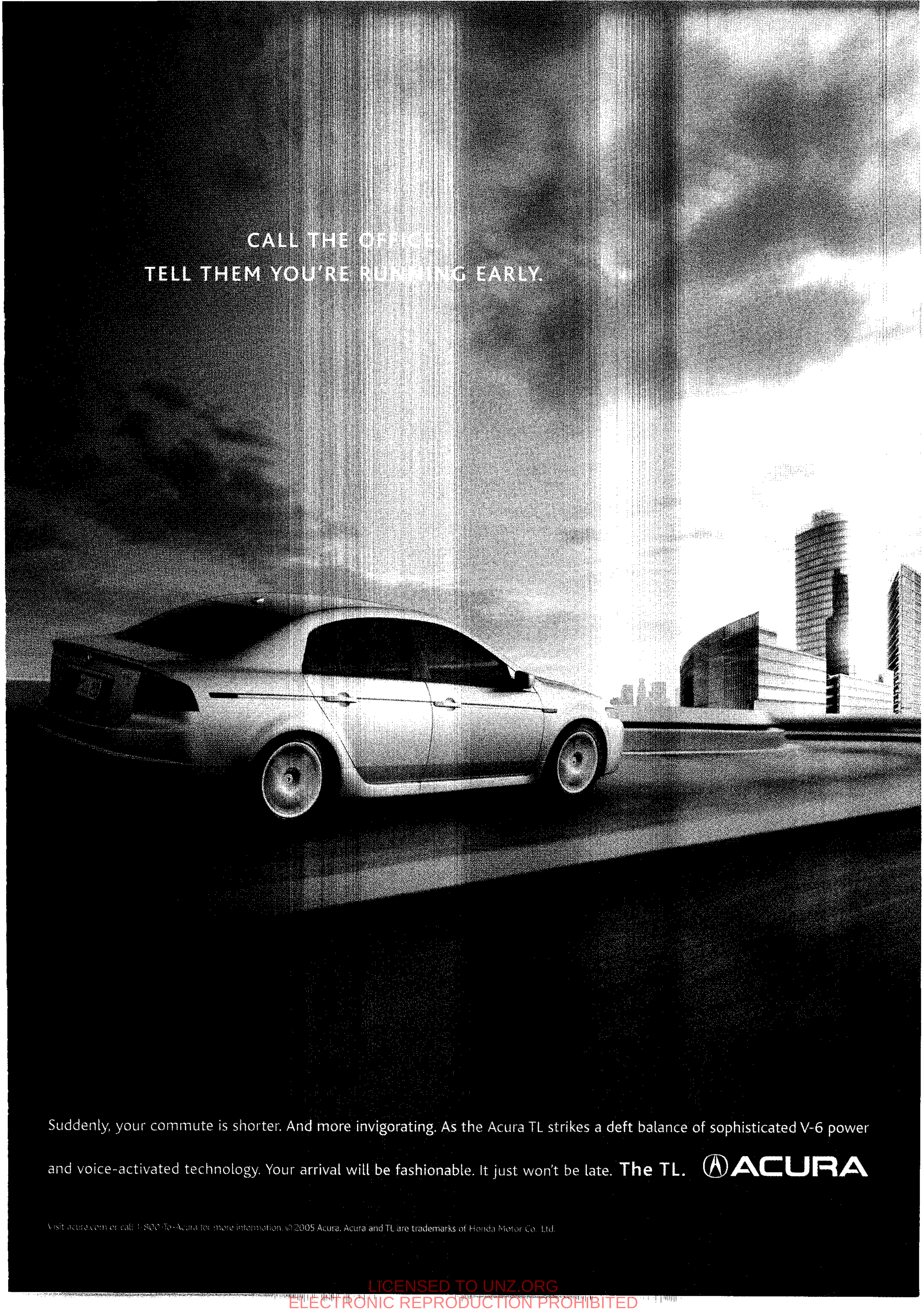
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CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Coll ("The Stand-Off," p. 126), a staff writer, won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction last year, with "Ghost Wars," his book about the C.I.A. and Afghanistan, which is available in paperback.

James B. Stewart ("The Opera Lover," p. 108) is the author of eight books, including "DisneyWar," which comes out in paperback in March.

Deborah Garrison (Poem, p. 132) is the poetry editor at Knopf. She is the author of "A Working Girl Can't Win: And Other Poems."

Peter Hessler ("Hutong Karma," p. 82) lives in Beijing. His book "Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present" will be published in May.

Mark Singer (The Talk of the Town, p. 48) has been a staff writer since 1974.

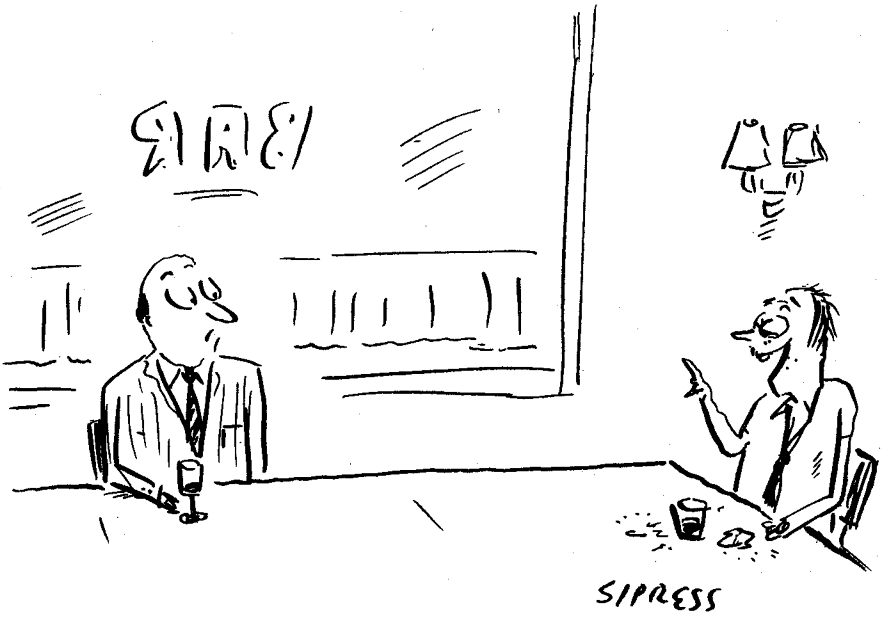
Joan Acocella ("The Saintly Sinner," p. 140) reviews dance and books for the magazine. A collection of her essays will be published next January.

Seamus Heaney (Poem, p. 86) received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. "District and Circle," a new collection of poems, comes out in the spring.

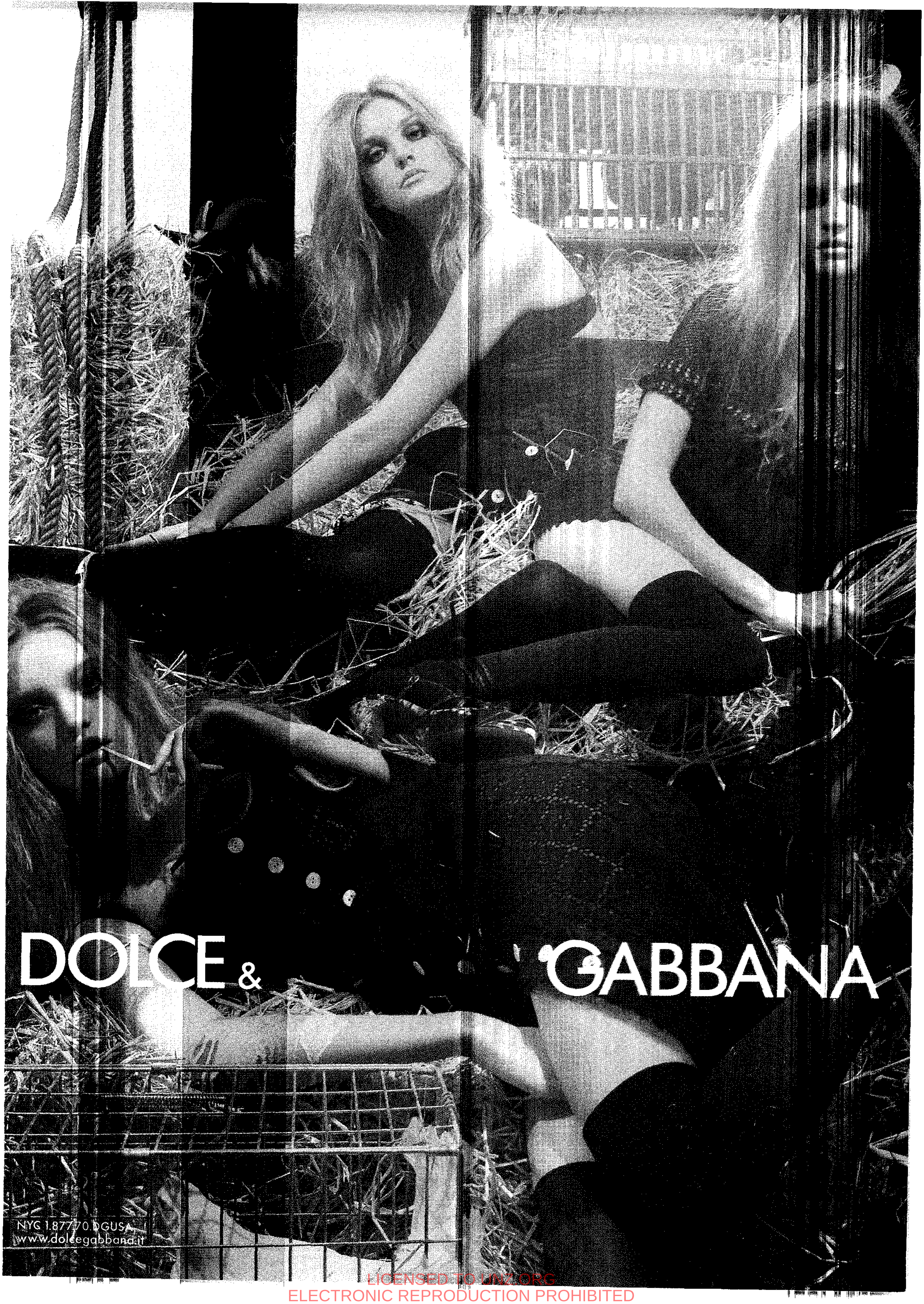
Malcolm Gladwell ("Million-Dollar Murray," p. 96) is the author of "The Tipping Point" and "Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking."

Jeffrey Goldberg ("The Believer," p. 56) is a political correspondent who writes the Letter from Washington.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 54) writes about business and finance for the magazine. He is the author of "The Wisdom of Crowds."



"I've been drunk on oil, but what really knocks your socks off is ethanol."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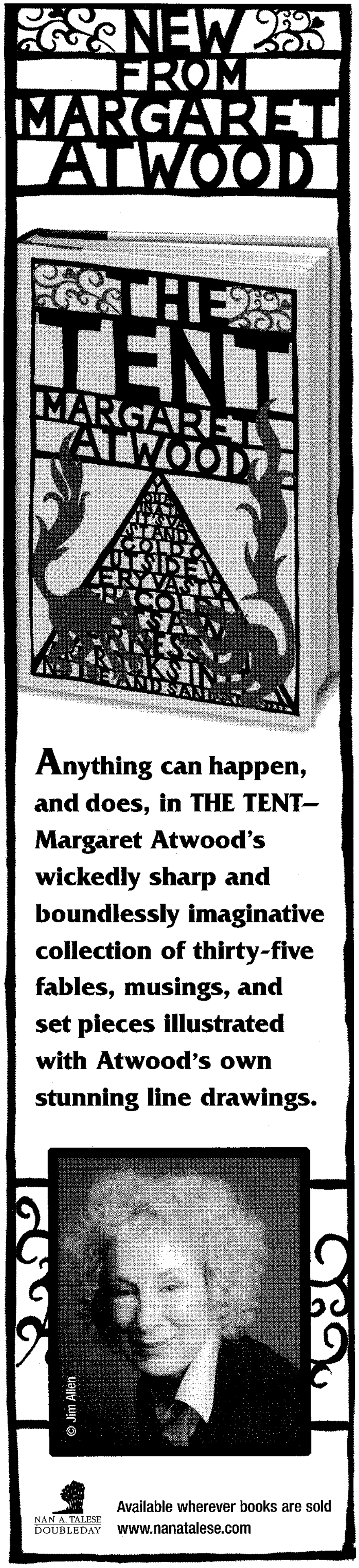

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Susan Orlean ("Little Wing," p. 70) has been writing for the magazine since 1987. A collection of her pieces, "My Kind of Place: Travel Stories from a Woman Who's Been Everywhere," is out in paperback.

Nora Ephron ("Serial Monogamy," p. 90) is a writer and film director. She will publish a book of essays, "I Feel Bad About My Neck," in August.

Mark Strand (Poem, p. 106) received a Pulitzer Prize in 1999 for "Blizzard of One." His next collection, "Man and Camel," comes out in the fall.

Adam Gopnik (A Critic at Large, p. 162) is the author of "Paris to the Moon" and "The King in the Window."

Dahlia Ravikovitch (Poem, p. 153), who died last year, published ten volumes of poetry and three short-story collections in her native Hebrew. "The Poetry of Dahlia Ravikovitch" will be published next year.

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 172) is the magazine's pop-music critic.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 47) is a senior editor who writes frequently about politics and policy. He is the author of "Politics: Observations & Arguments."

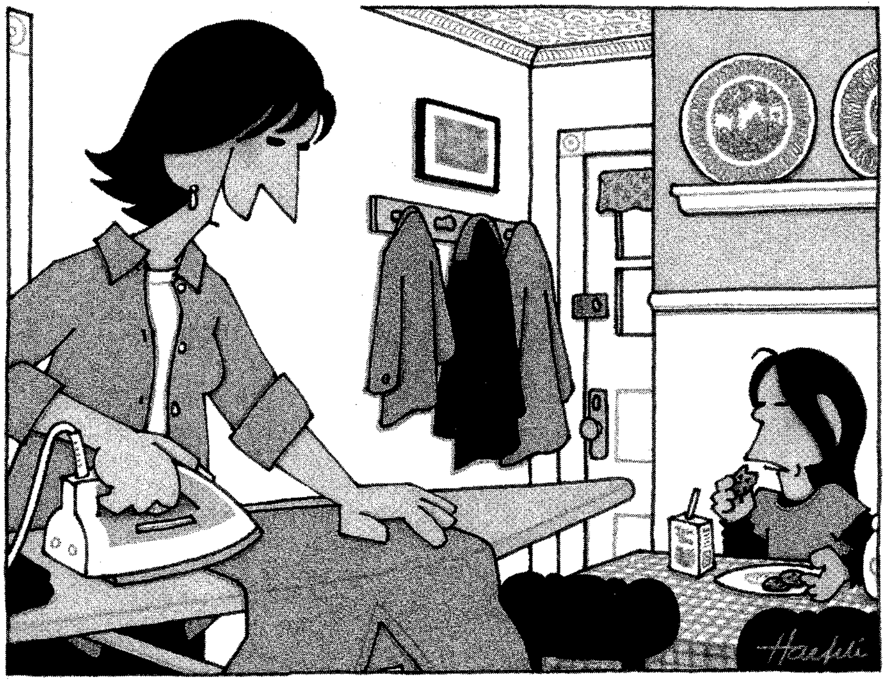
Haruki Murakami (Fiction, p. 150) has published more than ten novels, including "Kafka on the Shore." His new book of short stories, "Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman," comes out in September.

Lillian Ross (The Talk of the Town, p. 50), a longtime staff writer, is working on "One of a Kind," a book about actors, to be published next year.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 174) writes a regular column on television.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 176) is a film critic for the magazine. His books include "American Sucker" and "Great Books."

Aline & R. Crumb (Comic Strip, p. 123) have worked together on many projects over the past thirty years. R. Crumb's work can be seen in a group exhibit of comic-book artists at the Pratt Manhattan Gallery, in New York.♦



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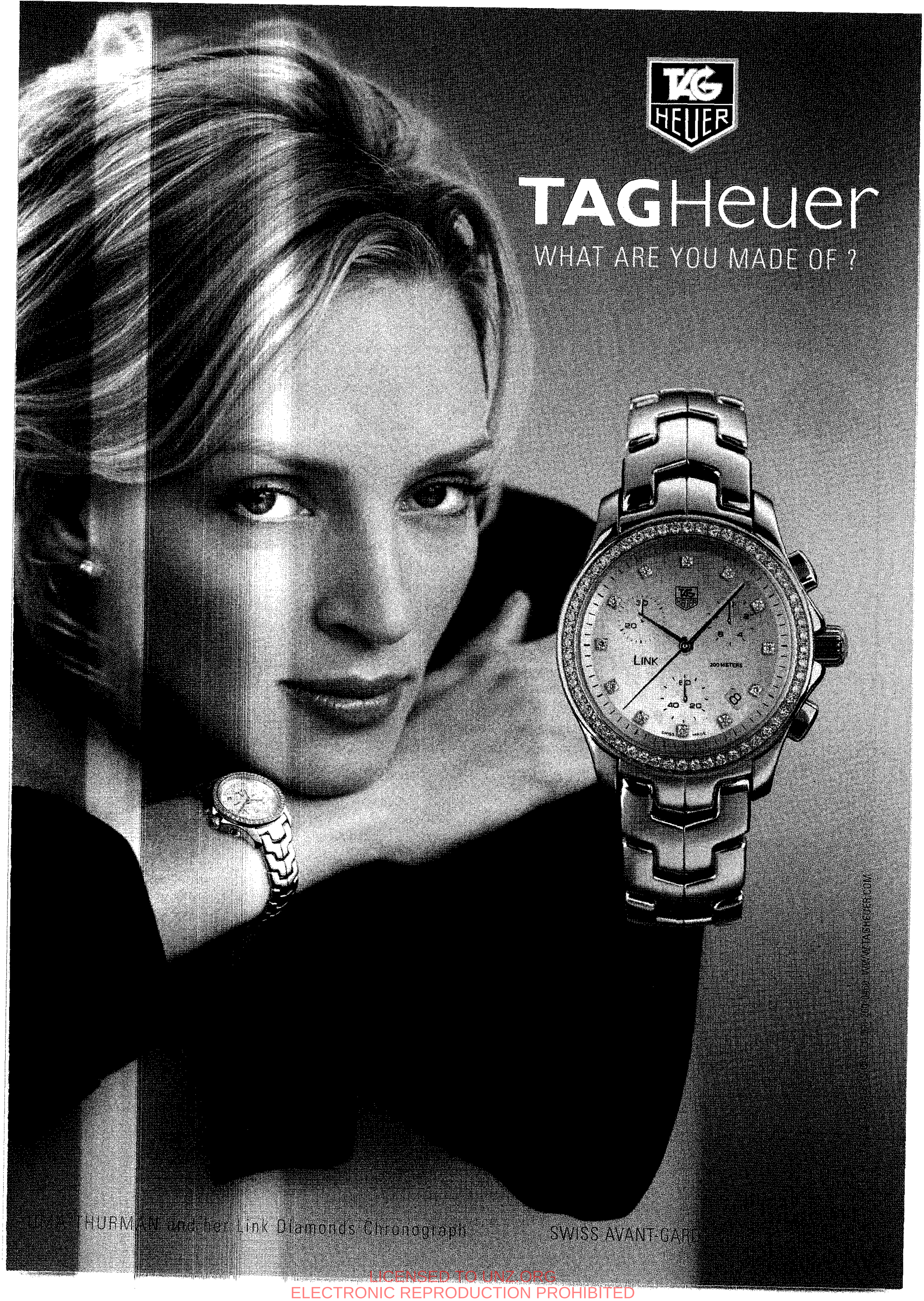
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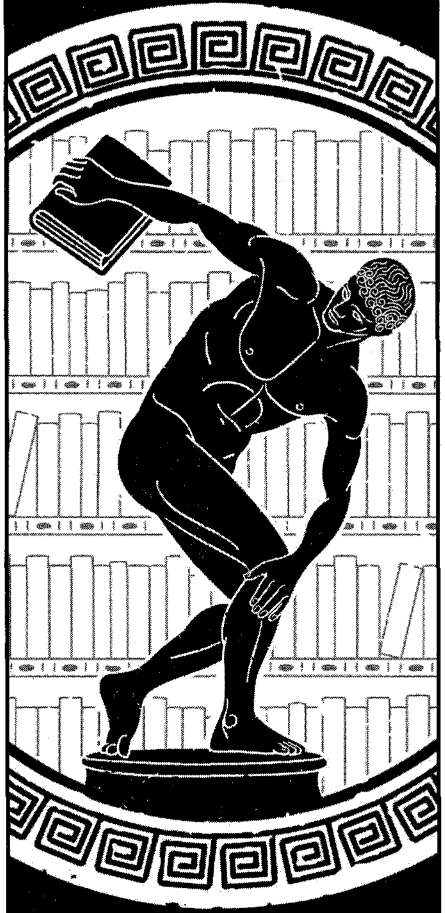

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SHARON'S LEGACY

Ari Shavit's Profile of Ariel Sharon humanized a man who has long seemed a symbol of religious hatred and aggression, while elucidating the long-standing conflict surrounding Israel ("The General," January 23rd & 30th). Sharon has a commendable love for the physical and historical landscape, which seems to be at the heart of his life and his politics. Unfortunately, he has equated that emotion with "the Jews' inherent right to have a Jewish state in the land where the Jewish people began." No group of people, anywhere, has been granted divine title to a portion of the earth's surface, and the Palestinian people have an equally strong attachment to this place. As Sharon eventually realized, there will be discord no matter how the land is divided. For this reason, the "two-state solution" will never be a satisfactory one. The only hope is a multicultural, multiethnic state in which the religious fervor on both sides can be replaced by a civil culture and fair property rights, and in which both Israelis and Palestinians can live peacefully in the land of their ancestors.

Chris Fales
Binghamton, N.Y.

Given Sharon's insistence that "an Arab is always an Arab," Shavit's suggestion that Israel is a "Jewish, democratic state" is absurd. True democracies are built on a foundational belief that all people are born equal, which is fundamentally inconsistent with groupings by religion, and the marginalization of the Palestinian citizens of Israel seems wholly at odds with the Jewish belief in equality before justice.

Badruddin Khan
San Francisco, Calif.

After reading Shavit's account of his many conversations with Ariel Sharon, my fear that Israel would politically fragment after Sharon's incapacitation was alleviated. Some of history's most renowned wartime leaders died or left office just short of completing the transition to peace. In Sharon's case, his approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict (grounded in years of mistrust) suggests that he was not the Israeli leader best suited to resolve it. As with his longtime foe Yasir Arafat, Sharon's removal from the political stage may have occurred at precisely the right moment, and may prove to be his most important contribution to the security of his people. Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's indication, made before the recent Hamas election victory, that he supports the establishment of a Palestinian state holds out the possibility that events will unfold just as they were intended.

David Karnes
Los Angeles, Calif.

LAST WORDS

Roger Angell, in an elegiac riff on tombstones, recalls the unusual demise of Alvin Rodecker, a Detroit businessman who was felled by a dumbbell accidentally dropped from the eighth-floor apartment of Martin Gabel and Arlene Francis ("Here Below," January 16th). Angell surmises that the last words of the unfortunate victim are not a matter of record. However, according to the *Times* of June 24, 1960, as Rodecker and his wife left the restaurant Le Pavillon and strolled toward Park Avenue, the Kansas native said, "Holy cow, what an expense that was. But it was worth it. We're really celebrating." At that moment, Rodecker was struck by the dumbbell and, despite a two-hour operation, died the following day.

James L. Murphy
Grove City, Ohio

•

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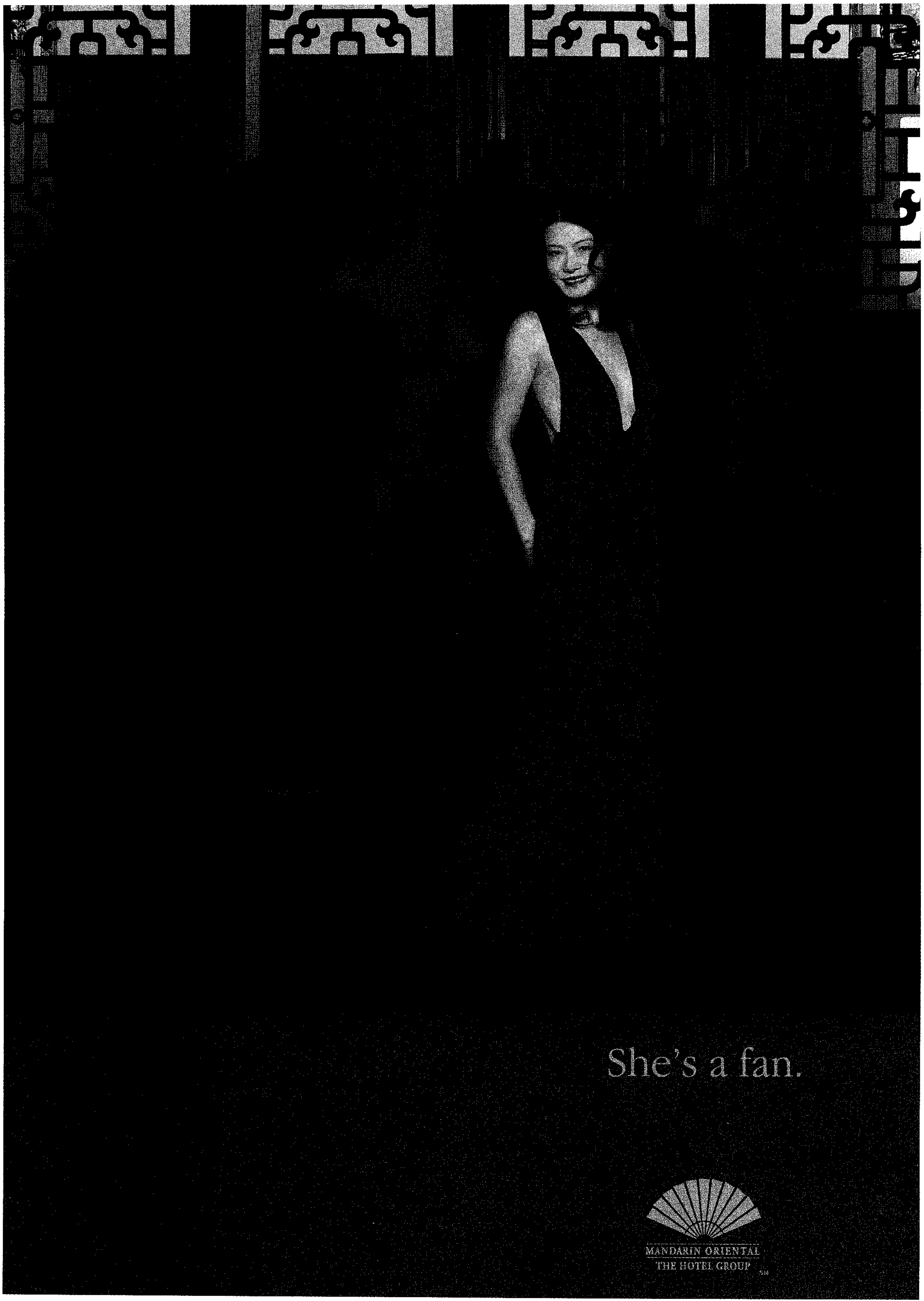

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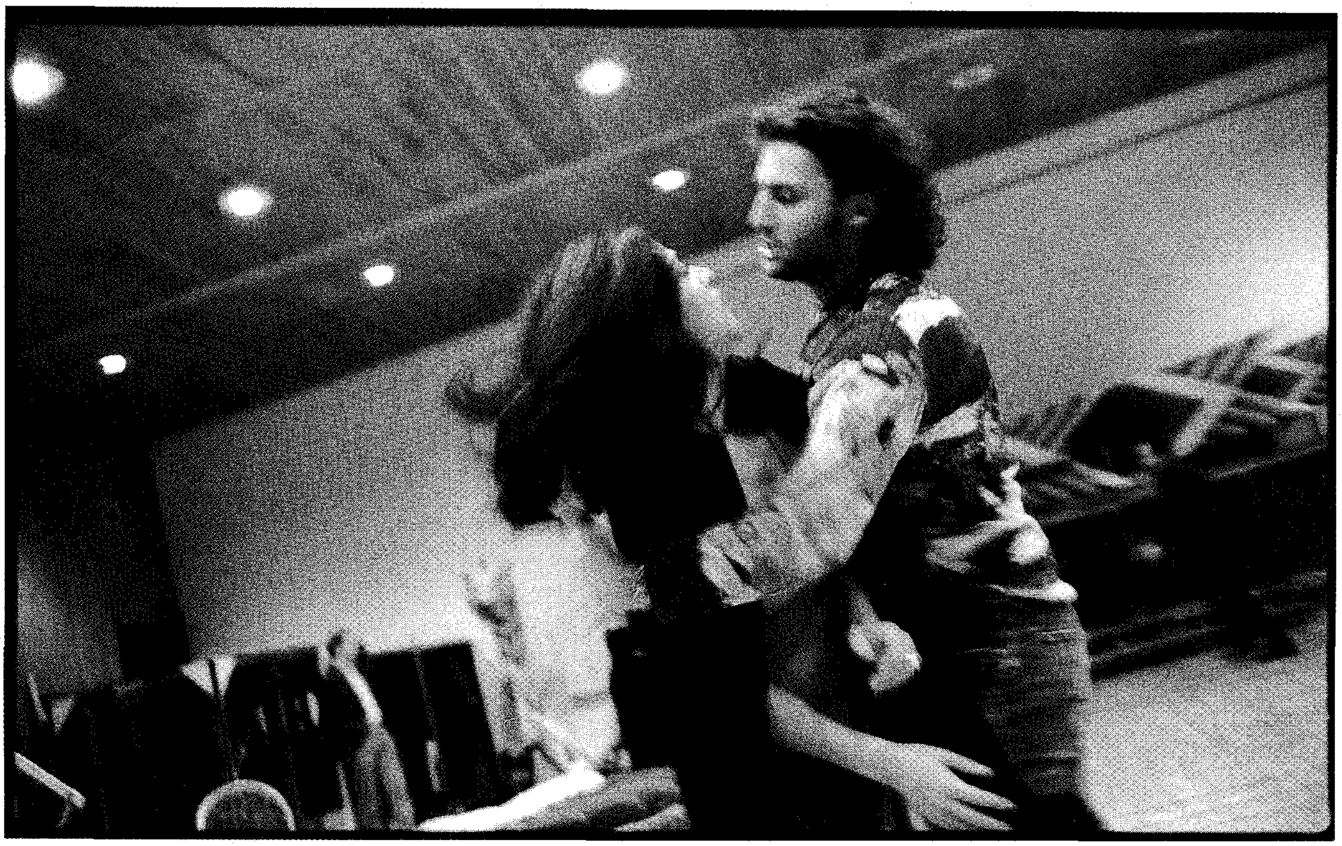

Angela Gheorghiu and Jonas Kaufmann rehearsing "La Traviata."
Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
TRIPLE THREAT

The prolific John Patrick Shanley has written a second play in an intended trilogy, which began with his Tony-winning hit "Doubt." "Defiance," a drama about two opposing officers, one black and one white, on a North Carolina military base, begins previews this week at City Center. (See page 24.)

NIGHT LIFE
BACK FOR MORE

The sprawling Staten Island hip-hop collective the Wu-Tang Clan lost a founding member last year, when Ol' Dirty Bastard died of an overdose. Most of the Clan's remaining members, including the RZA, the GZA, Raekwon, Method Man, and Ghostface, have reunited for a brief East Coast tour that brings them to the Hammerstein Ballroom. (See page 28.)

ART
BUILDING BLOCKS

The models and photographs in MOMA's "On-Site: New Architecture in Spain" document an explosion of innovative construction since 2000; of the fifty-three planned projects highlighted, eighteen have been completed. (See page 32.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MAINLY MOZART

As the celebration of Mozart's two-hundred-and-fiftieth birthday continues, lovers of the composer can gorge themselves on his orchestral music this month, with two major ensembles—the New York Philharmonic, with Lorin Maazel, and the Staatskapelle Berlin, with Daniel Barenboim—offering concerts featuring the last three symphonies, Nos. 39, 40, and 41 ("Jupiter"). (See page 36.)

MOVIES
IN BLACK AND WHITE

Chess, a handy substitute for reality, found favor, both as a subject and a pastime, among Surrealist artists. Anthology Film Archives presents chess-related films by such directors as René Clair and Maya Deren, with piano accompaniment by Margaret Leng Tan, who will also première chess-based compositions by John Cage, Vittorio Rieti, and Michael Nyman. (See page 41.)

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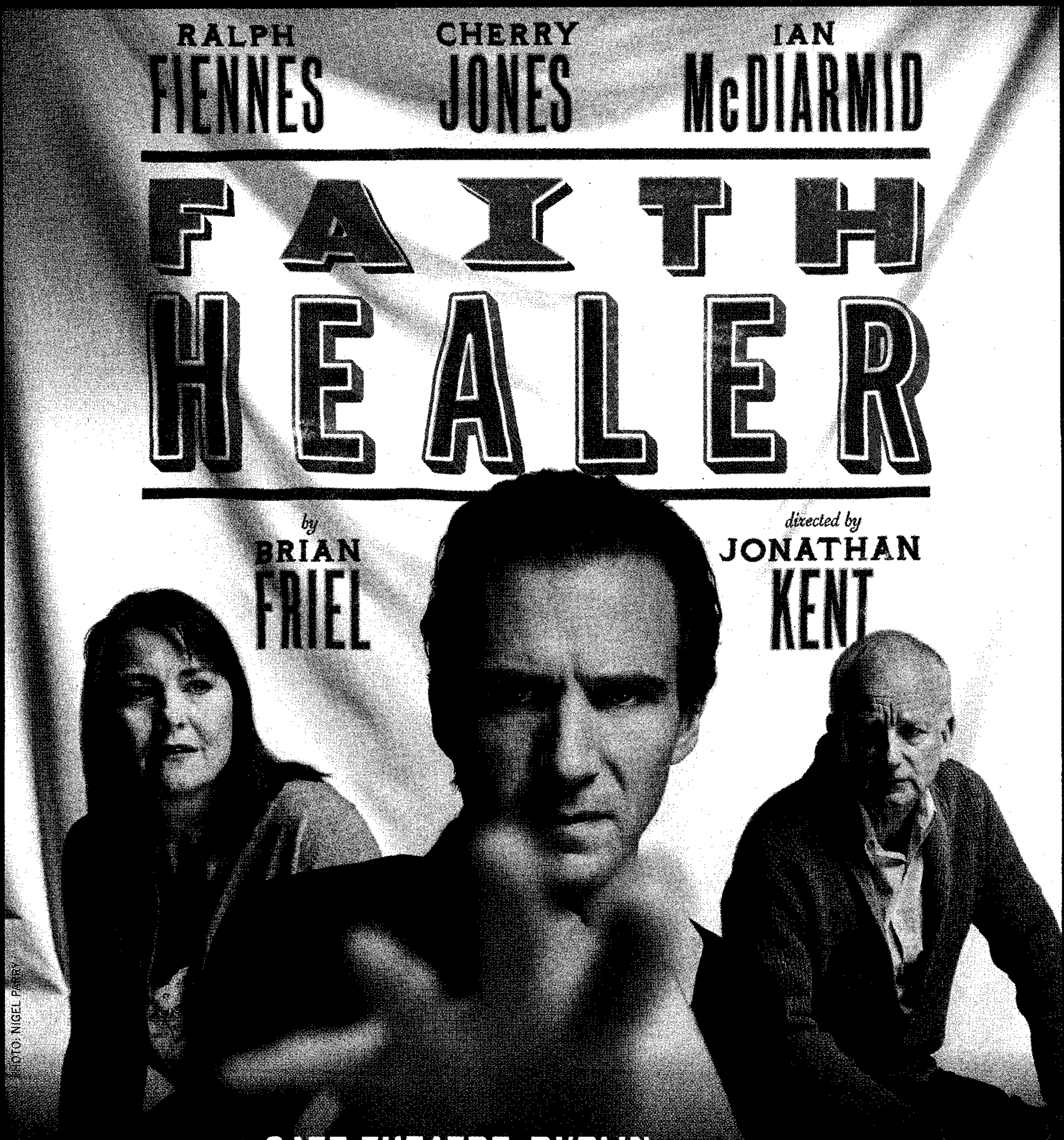
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THE THEATRE
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ACTS OF MERCY: PASSION-PLAY
The world première of a new play by Michael John Garcés, about two sons seeking reconciliation with their dying father. Directed by Gia Forakis. In previews. Opens Feb. 16. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL
Theatre for a New Audience presents Shakespeare's romantic comedy. In previews. Opens Feb. 12. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

ALL THE BAD THINGS
A developmental production for LAByrinth Theatre, written by Cusi Cram, about a married woman living with her mother in the West Village. Opens Feb. 15. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK
Amanda Peet, Patrick Wilson, Jill Clayburgh, and Tony Roberts star in a revival of Neil Simon's romantic comedy from 1963. Scott Elliott directs. In previews. Opens Feb. 16. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

BERNARDA ALBA
Phylicia Rashad stars in a new musical by Michael John LaChiusa, in which the strong will of a recent widow is subverted by her rebellious daughters. Choreographed and directed by Graciela Daniele. Previews begin Feb. 11. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

DEFIANCE
Manhattan Theatre Club presents John Patrick Shanley's new play, about racial tension on a North Carolina military base. Directed by Doug Hughes. Previews begin Feb. 9. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE
A revival of Joe Orton's play, in which a saucy landlady and her brother fall for the same man, starring Alec Baldwin. Directed by Scott Ellis. Previews begin Feb. 17. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

FANNY HILL
A new musical by Ed Dixon, based on the novel by John Cleland, about a young girl with big dreams in eighteenth-century London. In previews. Opens Feb. 14. (St. Peter's Theatre, 54th St. east of Lexington Ave. 212-868-4444.)

GREY GARDENS: A NEW MUSICAL
The cult film by the Maysles brothers about two Bouvier women living in a dilapidated Hamptons manse has been adapted into a musical, starring Christine Ebersole and Mary Louise Wilson. Directed by Michael Greif. Previews begin Feb. 10. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HEDDATRON
Les Freres Corbusier presents a half-actor-half-robot sendup of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler." In previews. Opens Feb. 16. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

I LOVE YOU BECAUSE
A young greeting-card writer discovers his girlfriend's infidelity and ventures back into the world of dating in New York. In previews. Opens Feb. 14. (Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

INDOOR/OUTDOOR
A romantic comedy by Kenny Finkle, from the perspective of a spoiled cat. In previews. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

JUMP/CUT
The Women's Project presents the New York première of a play by Neena Beeber, a dark comedy about a trio of documentary filmmakers. Directed by Leigh Silverman. In previews. Opens Feb. 12. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

KISMET
City Center's "Encores!" series includes this classic musical set in eleventh-century Baghdad, starring Brian Stokes Mitchell and Marin Mazzie. Directed by Lonny Price. Feb. 9-12. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE
An Atlantic Theatre Company presentation of a black comedy by Martin McDonagh ("The Pillowman"), about a secluded terrorist in Galway who discovers that his cherished cat has been killed. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

LA MAISON
Cécile Gérard stars in a one-woman show based on Marguerite Duras's "La Vie Matérielle," which explores the relationship between a woman and her home; soup will be served. In French with English supertitles. Feb. 15-17. (Skyroom at Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. 212-307-4100.)

Lee (Scratch) Perry, at the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill.

RACHEL DOMM

MEASURE FOR PLEASURE
A new comedy by David Grimm, about a transvestite prostitute, at the Public. Previews begin Feb. 21. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

THE MUSIC TEACHER
The New Group presents a new play by Wallace Shawn, about a young teacher who creates an opera with his protégée. Previews begin Feb. 21. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

THE PAJAMA GAME
Harry Connick, Jr., makes his Broadway début in a Roundabout Theatre Company revival of the 1954 musical. Kathleen Marshall directs. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

PORTRAITS—A FESTIVAL OF ONE-WOMAN SHOWS
Femme Fatale presents Victoria Roberts, a cartoonist for this magazine, in "Nona"; Denise Pelley in "Jazzabel"; and Molly Peacock in "The Shimmering Verge." Preview on Feb. 15. Opens Feb. 16. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

RED LIGHT WINTER
The New York première of a new play by Adam Rapp, about two young men who have a wild night in Amsterdam's red-light district, only to be haunted by it a year later. In previews. Opens Feb. 9. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

RETZACH
A translation of Hanoch Levin's play, about the cycle of violence that unfolds when a father finds that his young son has been killed by soldiers in an occupied land. Previews begin Feb. 9. Opens Feb. 16. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE RIGHT KIND OF PEOPLE
Primary Stages presents the New York première of a new play by the actor Charles Grodin, a satire about a Fifth Avenue co-op board. In previews. Opens Feb. 9. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

RING OF FIRE, THE JOHNNY CASH MUSICAL SHOW
The stories of the songs of Johnny Cash are portrayed in a new musical directed by Richard Maltby, Jr. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SEVEN
A new hip-hop musical by Will Power ("Flow"), an adaptation of Aeschylus' "Seven Against Thebes." Directed by Jo Bonney, with choreography by Bill T. Jones. In previews. Opens Feb. 12. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

SOLDIER'S WIFE
The Mint Theatre Company presents Rose Franken's romantic comedy set during the Second World War, about a soldier returning home from the South Pacific to his newly self-sufficient wife. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

THE WOODEN BREEKS
A new play by Glen Berger, set in the mythic village of Brood, about a poet who tries to cure heartache. Directed by Trip Cullman. In previews. Opens Feb. 15. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

BACK OF THE THROAT
A dark comedy by the Arab-American playwright Yussef El Guindi, about the racial-profiling methods used by the Department of Homeland Security. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

BEAUTY OF THE FATHER
In Nilo Cruz's new play (a Manhattan Theatre Club production at City Center) the ghost of Federico García Lorca (the brilliant Oscar Isaac) is the constant companion of Emiliano (Ritchie Coster), who is pursuing his life as a painter in Spain and hasn't seen his daughter, Marina (Elizabeth Rodriguez), in almost ten years. When Marina arrives, her father's sometime lover, a Moroccan named Karim (Pedro Pascal), falls in love with her. A playful element of surrealism is performed with such a lack of postmodern self-consciousness that one must congratulate the director, Michael Greif, on the ease of his staging. Cruz, a writer of ideas, has found an astonishing language with which to describe the magic in the everyday. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/23 & 30/06.) (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Feb. 19.)

BRIDGE & TUNNEL
Sarah Jones—tall, polyethnic, and Protean—assumes fourteen personas, including a Vietnamese-American slam poet and a neurotic, punning Pakistani-born m.c. She opens as the hunched crone Miss Lady, of the Homeless Ushers in the Theatres of New York program. "Don't feel sorry for me because I am homeless," she says. "Feel sorry for me because I have now seen 'Beauty and the Beast' over four hundred times." The audience laughs, but Jones's Can't-we-all-just-get-along? message plays as well with the Belle-and-Beast set as it does with the downtown fans who liked her enough at the Nuyorican Poets Café and at the Culture Project to risk the journey north. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

CONFESSIONS OF A MORMON BOY
A Fringe Festival hit from 2004, written by Steven Fales, about his experiences as a gay Mormon. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

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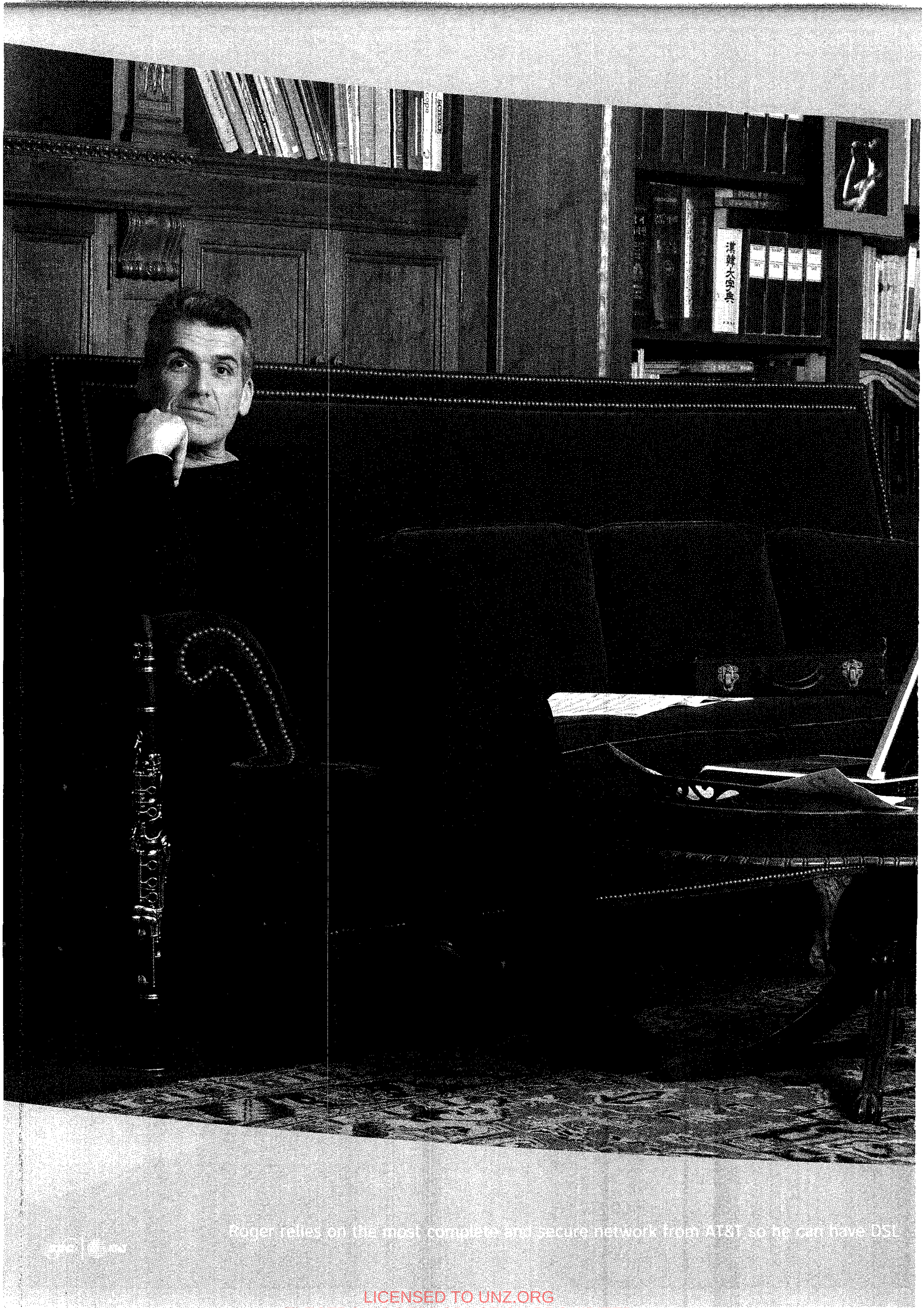
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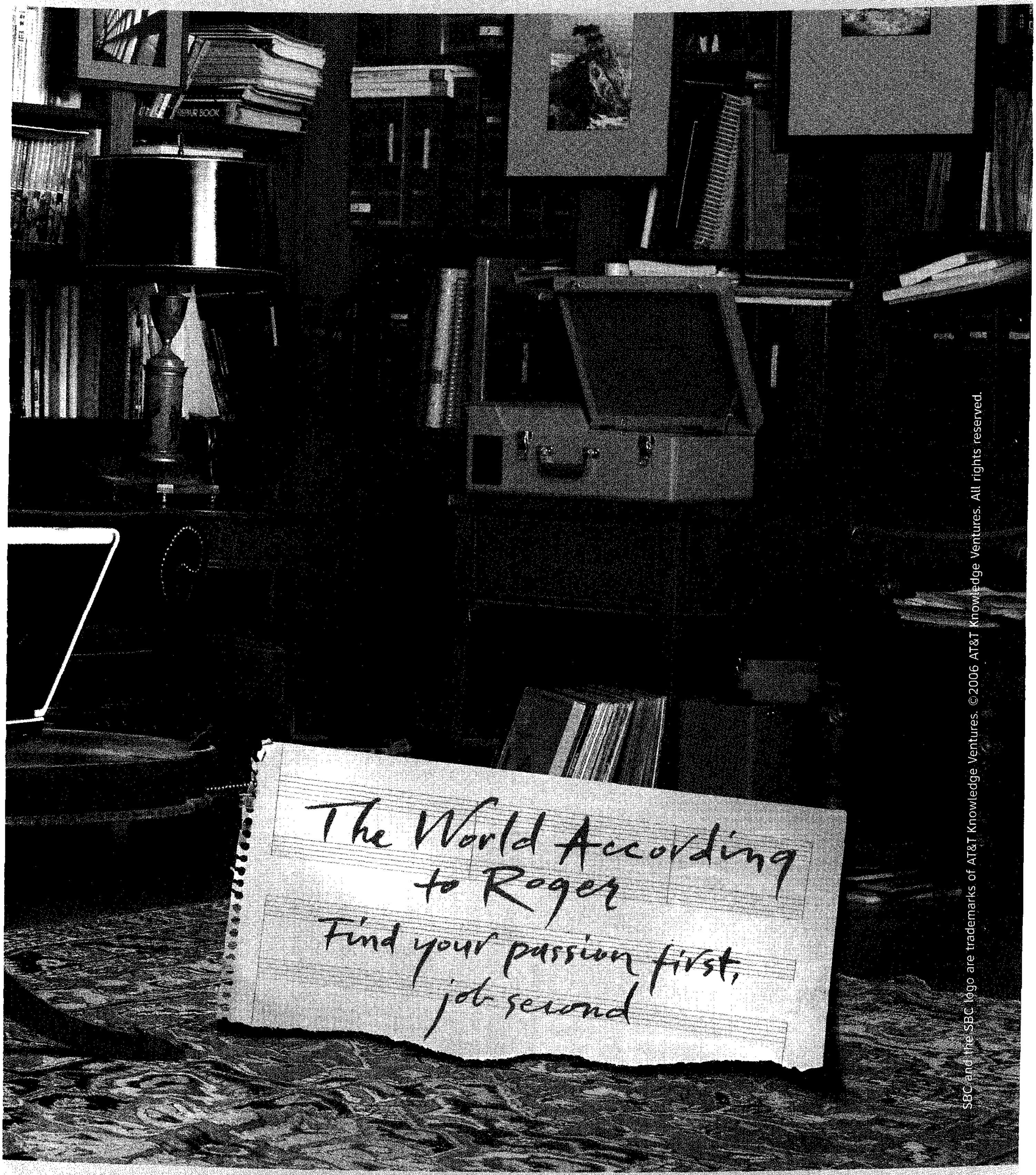
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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SOTH BOUND

ALEC SOTH

Like the Mississippi River, which anchored the photographer Alec Soth's first book in history, myth, and metaphor, Niagara Falls—the subject of his next book and a new exhibition at the Gagosian gallery's Chelsea outpost—is both a site and a state of mind. Romance and risk come together here with great frequency and force. Soth's photographs of the misty, magnificent falls set the scene, but they're outnumbered by pictures of the resort's honeymoon motels and the couples he found there, some still in their wedding outfits, some in the nude. Working in color in an unfussy documentary style that echoes Walker Evans, Stephen Shore, and Thomas Struth, Soth gives traditionalism a soulful spin by including photos of handwritten letters with a common theme. One note is addressed "To the love of my life," but most have been written long after the honeymoon is over. "I can't go on like this," one disillusioned woman writes in her opening line. She closes, "I hate you always. Take Care and Drop Dead."

—*Vince Aletti*

DECEMBER FOOLS
The world première of a drama by Sherman Yellen, about the daughter of a famous Broadway composer who unearths family secrets. Directed by Donald Brenner. (Abingdon Theatre Arts, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

ELLIOT, A SOLDIER'S FUGUE
A new play by Quiara Alegría Hudes, about a Hispanic soldier returning home from active duty in Iraq. (45 Below, 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101. Through Feb. 19.)

HECUBA
Shepard Sobel stages a largely effective production of Euripides' tragedy about Trojan noblewomen under Greek siege, in an elegant new translation by Janet Lembke and Kenneth J. Reckford. As the bereft queen, Joanne Camp journeys from anguish at Agamemnon's sacrifice of her daughter (the excellent Carolyn Ratteray) to vengeance upon the king of Thrace (Dominic Cuskern), who has murdered her son. While the conquering Greeks remain stiff behind their masks, the strength of this "Hecuba" lies in the naked grief of the actresses who dominate the stage. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through Feb. 12.)

LENNY BRUCE . . . IN HIS OWN WORDS
A portrait of the iconoclast comic, written and directed by Joan Worth and Alan Sacks. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

NO GREAT SOCIETY
Elevator Repair Service presents a new work in which Susie Sokol and Ben Williams incarnate Jack Kerouac and Steve Allen. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Through Feb. 18.)

RABBIT HOLE
Cynthia Nixon, John Slattery, and Tyne Daly star in the world première of a new play by David Lindsay-Abaire ("Fuddy Meers"). Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

ZOMBOID! (FILM/PERFORMANCE PROJECT #1)
The avant-garde dream builder Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre make their annual return, but this time around the medium of film has slipped neatly into the meticulous bedlam of Foreman's vision. Hovering over the stage are two large screens projecting tableaux of poker-faced actors in blindfolds. These images stand in oblique dialectical opposition to the live performers, who occupy a goth playroom littered with Dadaist toys: plaid cellos, jumbo eyeballs inscribed with Hebrew lettering, and a pair of stuffed donkeys who seem to bear particular symbolic import—periodically they are held prisoner, copulated with, ridden, and revered. The first in a planned multimedia series, "Zomboid!" signals a striking new twist in the director's confounding oeuvre. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-352-3101.)

Also Playing

ABIGAIL'S PARTY: Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITA RIVERA: THE DANCER'S LIFE:** Shoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **IN THE CONTINUUM:** Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444. Through Feb. 18. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. **MAJOR BANG:** St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through Feb. 19. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Through Feb. 19. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE ODD COUPLE:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **RFK:** The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL:** Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **THE WOMAN IN WHITE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
The Lincoln Center series continues on Feb. 9 with the fetching local country group **Hem.** Feb. 11: The beloved cultural archeologists of the **Loser's Lounge,** led by the keyboardist Joe McGinty, sift through the back catalogue of Burt Bacharach. (Allen Room, Rose Hall, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5305)—Feb. 14: The seventies R. & B. titans the **O'Jays.**

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Feb. 10: The New York City outfit **24-7 Spyz,** peers and late-eighties Black Rock Coalition compatriots of Vernon Reid's band Living Colour, were pioneers in mixing soul, funk, and hardcore styles, paving the way for the likes of Korn and Limp Bizkit. With the art punk of Philadelphia's **Phil Moore Brown.**

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Feb. 9: **Sanda Weigl,** a Bucharest native and gifted interpreter of song, presents a musical autobiography, arranged by Anthony Coleman. The program, originally commissioned last year by the German arts festival Ruhr Triennale, features Gypsy music from Weigl's youth, revolutionary songs from her adolescence in sixties East Germany (she was a chart-topping rock star in a state-sanctioned band, and was later imprisoned, and ultimately exiled, for dissident activities), and cabaret songs by Friedrich Hollander and Mischa Spoliansky from her adult years in West Germany, where she worked with the theatre director Robert Wilson before moving to New York in 1992.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Feb. 9: **Eddie Money,** the former New York City cop and radio stalwart responsible for such anthems as "Two Tickets to Paradise," "Baby Hold On," and "Take Me Home Tonight." Feb. 13: **Lee (Scratch) Perry,** the notorious reggae eccentric (who once walked backward for several miles while banging a hammer on the ground and who reportedly burned down his legendary Black Ark studios), produced hits by Bob Marley and the Wailers; Gregory Isaacs; his own band, the Upsetters; and the Clash. More recently, he won a Grammy for best reggae album, "Jamaican ET," in 2003, and he has a new release coming out in the spring featuring TV on the Radio, Sinéad O'Connor, Moby, George Clinton, and others. Feb. 16: The **Rembrandts,** who gave the world "I'll Be There for You," the theme from the TV show "Friends," are joined by **Jesse Valenzuela,** formerly of the Gin Blossoms, and **Craig Northey,** an ex-front man for the Odds, for a musical romp through the Clinton era. Feb. 21: A night of bicoastal coöperation as **GZA,** a revered lyricist with the Staten Island hip-hop collective Wu-Tang Clan, shares the stage with **DJ Muggs,** of Cypress Hill. The two recently collaborated on the album "Grandmasters," which featured contributions from members of both groups.

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—Ol' Dirty Bastard (O.D.B.), one of the most charismatic rappers in the game and a founding member of the **Wu-Tang Clan,** was working on a comeback album a little over a year ago when he collapsed in the studio and died. The lyricist GZA, a fellow Wu-Tang member, recently recorded a tribute to his late cousin, "All in Together Now." That heartfelt song features another cousin and Wu-Tang member, RZA. On Feb. 14, the clan reunites to honor its fallen brother.

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JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Feb. 11: **Hazmat Modine.** What do you get when you combine a pair of harmonicas, a tuba, some drums, a lap steel guitar, a trumpet, and the throat-singing group Huun-Huur-Tu? You get "Bahamut," the début album by this wild group led by the singer and harmonica player Wade Schuman. They play blues originals, mostly, that are the product of Schuman's limitless imagination. His voice, for that matter, appears to be bottomless. Feb. 16: A rare appearance by the folksinger **Livingston Taylor.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Feb. 14: The vocalist **Diamanda Galas** offers a little Valentine's Day catharsis. Feb. 21: The spacey electro-psychedelia of Chicago's **Midstates.**

"LET'S ZYDECO"
The roving concert series dedicated to the indigenous music of Louisiana sets down at Connolly's, an Irish pub in midtown with a fine wooden dance floor. **Geno Delafose** and **French Rockin' Boogie** perform on Feb. 19. (121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Feb. 11: **Deadboy & the Elephantmen** is the vocalist Dax Riggs, on guitar and vocals, and Tessie Brunet, on drums. The two hail from Louisiana, and their spooky blues rock is pure swamp gothic, with Riggs singing like a ghostly David Bowie.

THEATRE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Feb. 9: The epic Icelandic rock of **Sigur Rós.**

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Feb. 14: The singer-songwriter **Syd Straw** serves up her annual Heartwreck Show. This year's guests include the guitarist **Jody Harris,** who played with Straw in the eighties cult band the Golden Palominos, and the notoriously blond and beehived **Christine Ohlman,** the longtime vocalist of the SNL Band. Expect original tunes from Straw's forthcoming album, "Pink Velour," plus torch songs and covers that offer a musical guide to love for the romantically perplexed.

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—Feb. 9: The singer-songwriter **Aimee Mann.** Feb. 14: The indie-rock femme fatale **Cat Power** has a new album, "The Greatest," which taps into her Southern roots. Power (a.k.a. Chan Marshall) was born in Atlanta in 1972, and the record was recorded in Memphis with an all-star backing band that includes Mabon (Teenie) Hodges, who played guitar for Al Green and co-wrote the eternal hits "Love and Happiness" and "Take Me to the River." Hodges and the other soul vets join her here. Feb. 15: **Pink Martini,** the mini-orchestra from Portland, Oregon, led by the classically trained pianist Thomas M. Lauderdale, sashays between Cuban rumbas, French café tunes, and other genres.

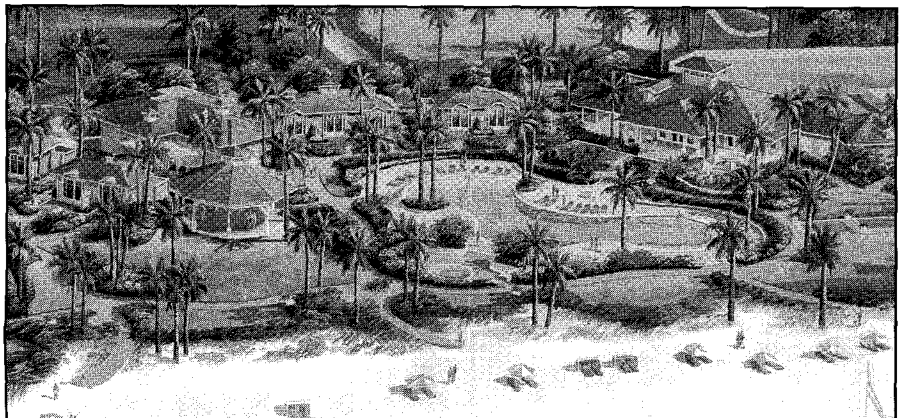
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Feb. 25: The vocalist **Maude Maggart.**

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
Feb. 8: The gregarious vocalist and pianist **Eric Comstock** salutes Jule Styne, the composer who gave us "Gypsy" and "Funny Girl." (Allen Room, Rose Hall. Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Feb. 8-11: Back in the seventies, the Polish pianist **Adam Makowicz** was the fastest gun in town; he makes a rare appearance with the bassist **George Mraz** and the drummer **Al Foster.**

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Feb. 25, the vocalist **Ute Lemper,** who balances sophistication and sensuality like no one else.



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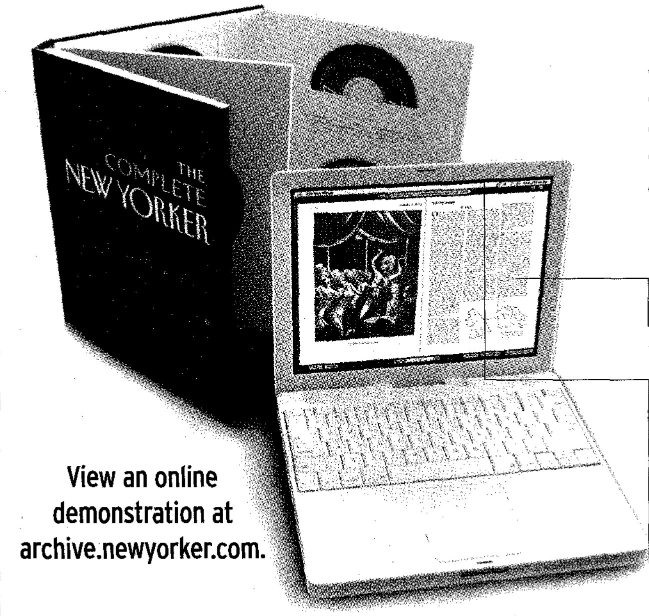

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DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Feb. 7-12: The pianist **Renee Rosnes,** joined by the saxophonist **Jimmy Greene,** pays tribute to the late tenor giant Joe Henderson. Feb. 14-19: **Cyrus Chestnut** and **Eric Reed,** two prodigiously gifted pianists united by their talent and gospel roots.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Feb. 13: **Bucky Pizzarelli,** the dean of the seven-string guitar, joins two other guitar luminaries, his son **John** and the elegant stylist **Gene Bertoncini.** Feb. 14-25: The Broadway stars **Faith Prince** and **Tom Wopat.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Two weeks of seasoned jazz singing from the veterans **Jimmy Scott** (Feb. 9-12) and **Mark Murphy** (Feb. 16-19). Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Feb. 14: The vocalist **Dee Dee Bridgewater.** (Rose Theatre.) Feb. 16-18: Two proud scions of Pittsburgh, the drummer **Jeff (Tain) Watts** and the vibraphonist **Steve Nelson,** along with the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra,** turn the spotlight on Art Blakey, Billy Strayhorn, Mary Lou Williams, and other jazz legends from their city. (Rose Theatre.) Feb. 22: The Russian saxophonist **Igor Butman** incorporates the viola virtuoso **Yuri Bashmet** into his big band for a "Classical Meets Jazz" concert. (Rose Theatre.)

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Feb. 9-12: The keyboardist **Larry Goldings** celebrates the release of his new album, "Quartet." Feb. 14-15: **Freddy Cole** recalls his brother Nat, in the quality of his singing as well as in his style.

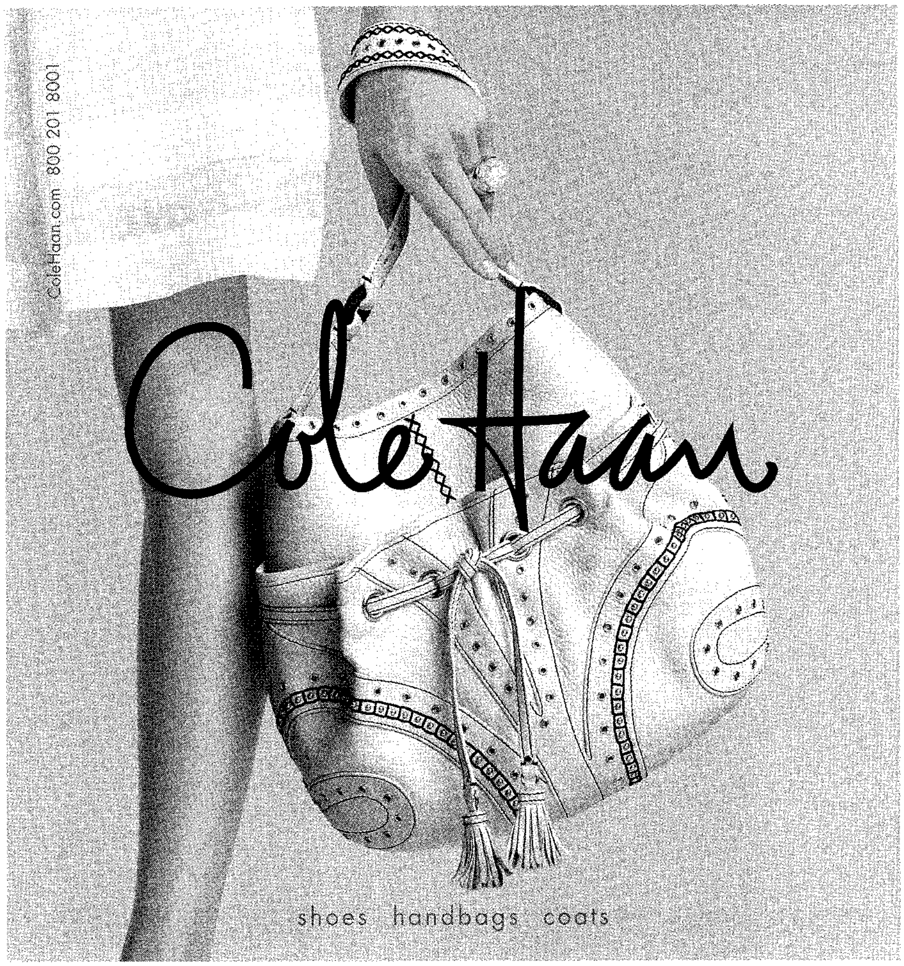
THE STONE
Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—Feb. 12: The drummer **Ben Perowsky,** with help of the pianist **Uri Caine,** reinterprets Jewish camp songs from summers upstate. Feb. 14: The accordion-wielding singer and certified free spirit **Rachelle Garniez** plays artful love songs with plenty of sass. Feb. 16: An ecstatic improvised adventure with the drummer Perowsky and the Swiss avant pianist **Sylvie Courvoisier,** whose hands—both on and inside the piano—can have a dizzying effect. (For more information, visit www.thestonenyc.com.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Feb. 7-12: The **Barry Harris** trio. The pianist Harris is a classicist and a seducer who eases into authentic bop runs with a temperate touch, always placing melody before virtuosity. Feb. 14-19: The **Bill McHenry** quartet. One of the most gifted saxophonists of his generation, McHenry is joined by the acclaimed drummer **Paul Motian,** among others. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Feb. 18: With his new album and multimedia project "Keystone," the trumpeter and composer **Dave Douglas** tips his hat to the silent-screen clown Fatty Arbuckle through an anachronistic but pleasing blend of fusion-era jazz and hip-hop, the latter courtesy of his band member **DJ Olive.**

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Robert Rauschenberg: Combines."** A majestic, exhilarating show of painting-sculpture hybrids dating from the fifties and early sixties. Through April 2. ♦ The small but notable exhibition **"Antonello da Messina: Sicily's Renaissance Master"** includes his masterly, enigmatic "Virgin Annunciate," which is, by itself, worth a trip to the museum. Through March 5. ♦ **"The Armored Horse in Europe, 1480-1620"** is a one-room show of leather and metal examples from the golden age of the obsolete craft of horse armor. Items range from brutally practical



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sets made for low-ranking soldiers to more fanciful designs displayed by kings in military parades. Through Jan. 14, 2007. ♦ **"Santiago Calatrava: Sculpture Into Architecture."** Influenced by Brancusi, Matisse, and Giacometti as well as his fellow Spanish visionary Antonio Gaudi, Santiago Calatrava has always been as much a sculptor as an architect. His soaring, winglike buildings—including the proposed new World Trade Center transportation hub—are presented via delicate white architectural models and video tours; his monumental abstract carvings and casts in marble, granite, bronze, and steel fill out the crowded exhibition. Through March 5. ♦ On Mohs' scale for measuring mineral hardness, a diamond registers 10, steel between 5 and 6, and jade a surprising 6.5 to 7. The smooth, dense stone, very difficult to carve, is the vehicle for **"The Bishop Jades,"** a group of intricate reliefs, detailed figurines, and translucent bowls in shades of moss and sea-foam green from the Qing dynasty in China (1644-1911) and the Mughal empire in India (1526-1858). They formed the collection of Heber R. Bishop, which was given to the museum in 1902 and is on view in the Irving Galleries through Feb. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"In-Depth: The House of Spiritual Retreat by Emilio Ambasz"** examines a house that was built last year in Spain, more than twenty years after it was first designed for an imaginary site. Through March 6. ♦ **"John Szarkowski: Photographs."** Through May 15. ♦ The retrospective **"Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul"** opens Feb. 19. ♦ **"On-Site: New Architecture in Spain,"** a survey of fifty-three recent or planned architectural projects, opens Feb. 12. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"David Smith: A Centennial."** Smith (1906-65) parlayed his experiences as a welder, an employee of the Studebaker company, a painter, and an acolyte of the Cubist movement into tremendous steel sculptures that were championed by Clement Greenberg and have become emblems of American industry and style. Through May 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

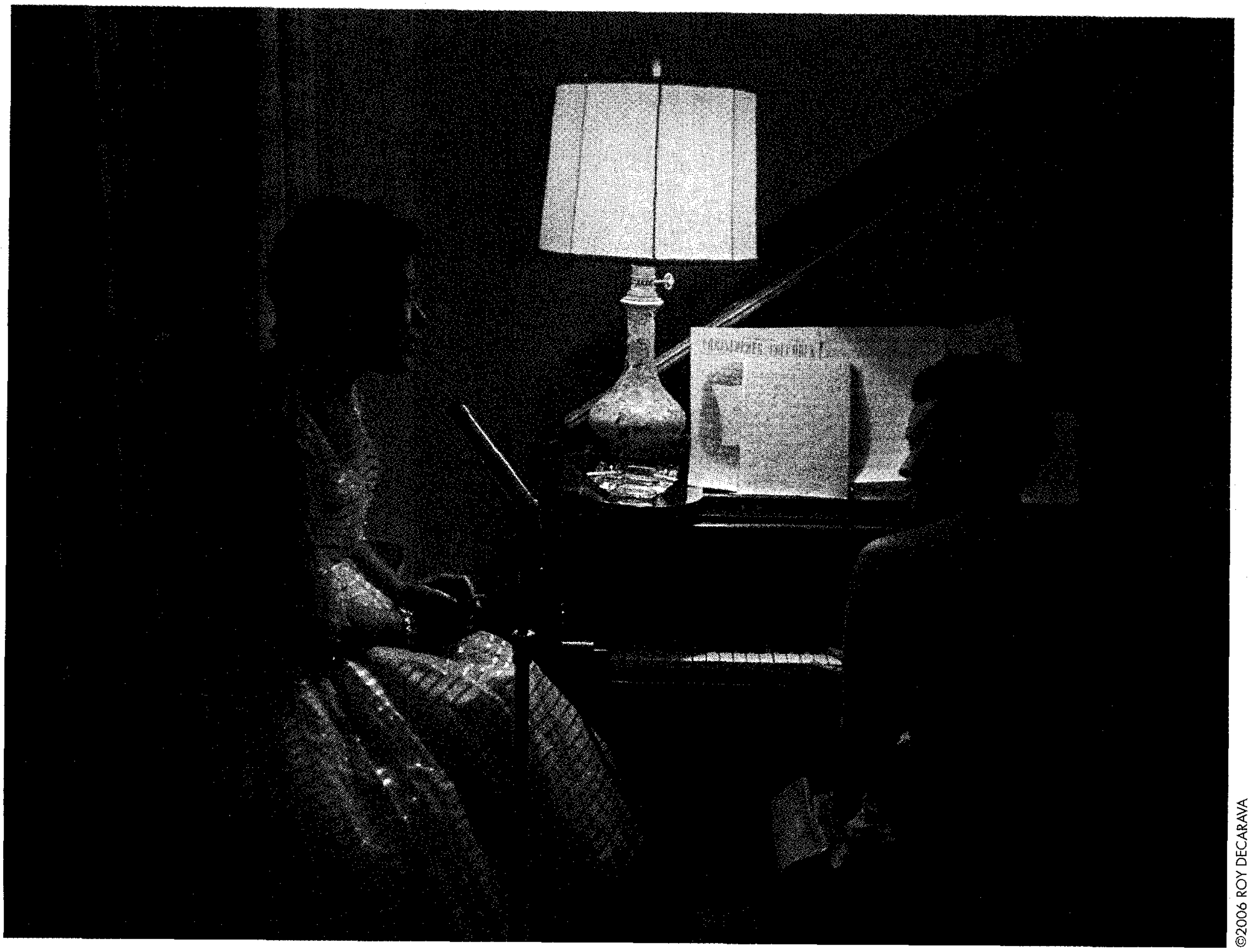
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Curating can sometimes seem like a game of charades: pick a word or category and program a show around it. Few of the permanent-collection works in **"Skin Is a Language"** (the title inverts a statement from Roland Barthes) gain significantly from using skin as the context. Glenn Ligon's homage to Ralph Ellison is a cogent illustration of this, as is Catherine Opie's photographic self-portrait with a naïve line drawing of a lesbian couple razored into her back. Works that explore skinlike patterns and textures, like Eva Hesse's leaf photogram or Nancy Grossman's S & M leather hood, are serviceable examples, while others, like Roni Horn's photographs of clowns, seem off the mark. Through May 21. ♦ **"Raymond Pettibon."** Thirty-seven drawings and an animated film. Through Feb. 19. ♦ **"Standard Gauge: Film Works by Morgan Fisher, 1968-2003."** Fisher's film installation "Color Balance" (1980) is on view though Feb. 9; on Feb. 10-12, it will be replaced by a series of nine of his short films. See www.whitney.org for a program schedule. ♦ The retrospective **"Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color"** reveals a painter (1867-1938) who melded Old World influences with an architect's training and eye—updated later by the lessons of the Fauves, Die Brücke, and artists like Franz Marc—to produce images of buildings and landscapes broken into bright structural shards, like segments of stained glass. Through Feb. 12. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—When did black clothes become the sign of sober conservatism and knowing chic? Why did seventeenth-century tastemakers alter their stern opinions about patterned motley? Is yellow still the color of frivolity, as it was for eighteenth-century dandies and ladies dressed à la française? The answers, along with sixty-eight exquisite representative garments designed by everyone from Chanel to Kawakubo, are presented in **"Fashion in Colors,"** a sampler from the eleven-thousand-piece collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute, which preserves Western designs. Organized by hue rather than date, the exhibition tracks chemical-dye innovations (when color got cheap, black became classic) and Asian influences on European style (imported silks stimulated use of complex patterns and bright shades). Through March 26. ♦ For an institution with a large, and mostly unseen, collection, the artist-as-curator offers a surefire exhibition strategy. It works charmingly in **"Yinka Shonibare Selects,"** with the Nigerian-British artist plundering the Cooper-Hewitt's storerooms to mount a small, expansive show examining fantasies of transportation, enclosure, and release. Through May 7. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY

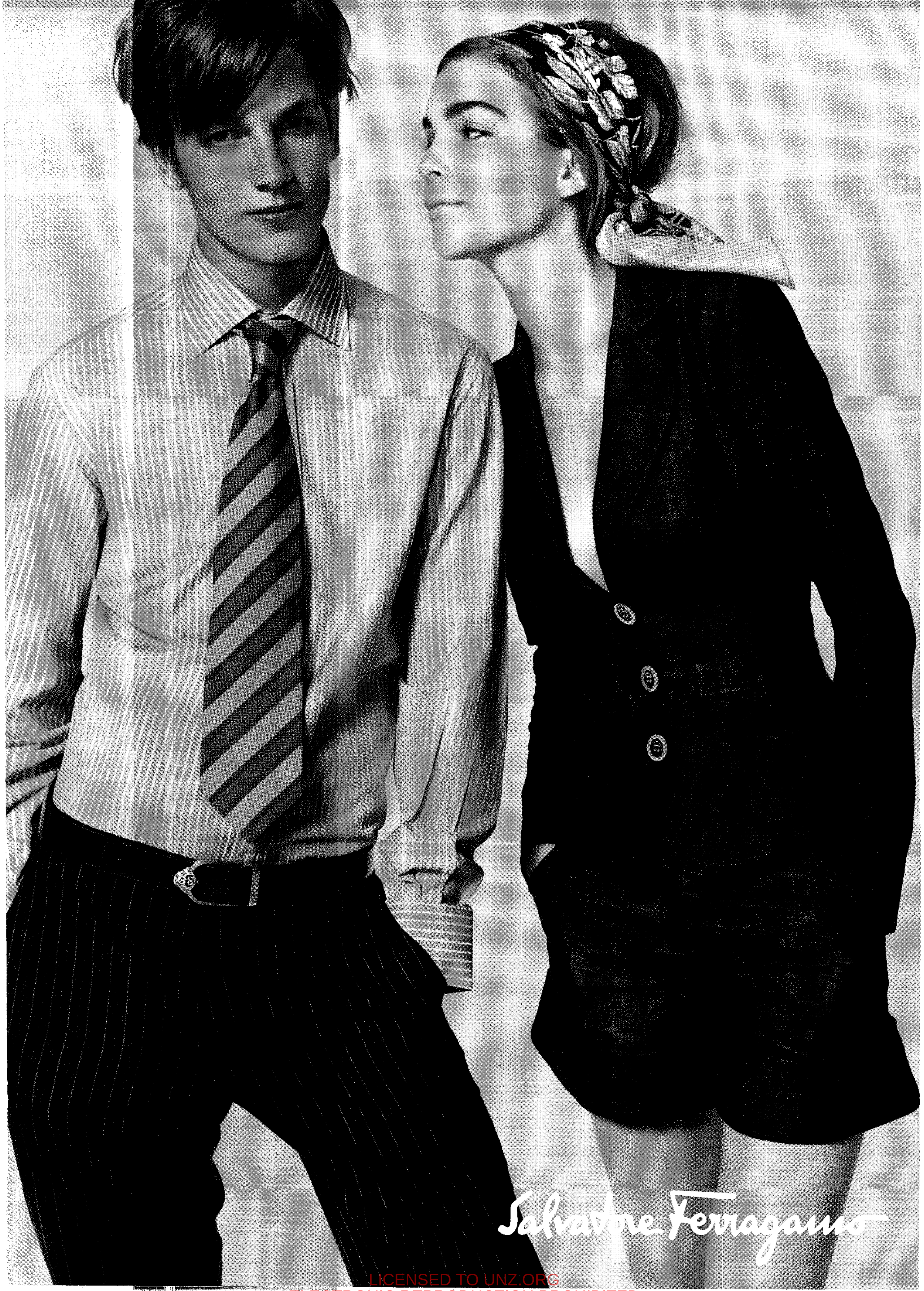
333 E. 47th St. (212-752-3015)—Hiroshi Sugimoto's **"History of History"** juxtaposes his photographs



©2006 ROY DECARAVA

"Billie Holiday and Hazel Scott at Party, 1957," from a show of Roy DeCarava's photographs, at Jenkins Johnson.

I LOVE SALVATORE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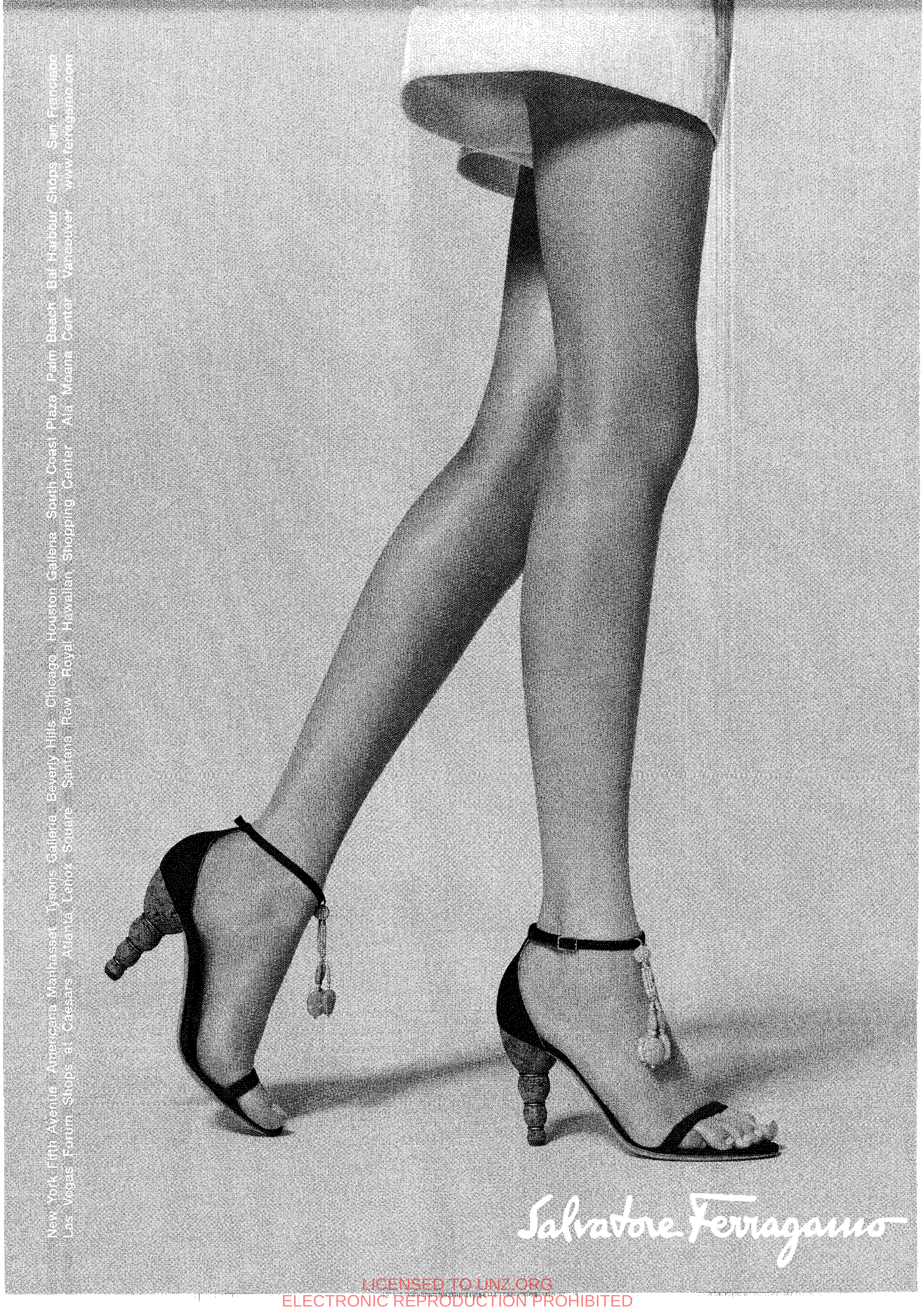
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Las Vegas Forum Shops at Caesars Atlanta Lenox Square Santana Row Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center Ala Moana Center Vancouver www.ferragamo.com
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with fossils, scrolls, masks, and other ancient Asian art and artifacts from his own collection. Through Feb. 19. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

QUEEN SOFÍA SPANISH INSTITUTE
684 Park Ave., at 68th St. (212-628-0420)—The institute's galleries make an exceptionally stark setting for an exhibition of the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos's collection of engravings by **Giovanni Battista Piranesi** (1720-78). But the lushness of the prints overcomes the surroundings: they're a gluttonous feast for the eye. A 1760-61 second edition of Piranesi's "Carceri d'Invenzione," with its famous, fanciful prisons, offers a range of virtuosic detail as he imagines Möbius-strip architectural structures that look more palatial than penitentiary. Views of Rome ("Vedute di Roma") occupy airier compositions but have a similarly creepy Baroque-gothic treatment of ostentatious palazzi or corroding structures, with tiny, faceless humans in the foreground serving as witnesses to the cycles of history. Through Feb. 13. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 6, Fridays, 10 to 8, and Saturdays, 11 to 5.)

THE SCULPTURE CENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—"The art of losing isn't hard to master," Elizabeth Bishop wrote in her poem "One Art." **Anya Gallaccio** borrows Bishop's title for a meditation on themes of decay and reclamation. Her piece is a huge dead tree, a weeping cherry cut into pieces and bolted back together in the Sculpture Center's soaring industrial space, so that its branches graze the iron beams and clerestory windows fifty feet above the ground. The tree was salvaged from a construction site and has no roots—held up by guy wires and brutally scaffolded by metal struts, it projects a monstrous, captive grace. Through April 3. ♦ The latest iteration of the **"In Practice Projects"** series presents the work of eight young artists grappling with the venue's catacombish basement and high-walled, gravel-strewn courtyard. Standouts are Mary Temple's barely-there wall work—what appears to be a leafy shadow cast against a subterranean wall is in fact painted on—and Monika Zarzeczna's cell-like installation of a desk, a lamp, and a litter of small, awkwardly posed portraits. Be sure to check the schedule to see Xavier Cha perform his weekly Cossack dance. Through April 3. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

TABLES FOR TWO
BLAUE GANS

139 Duane St. (212-571-8880)—"I miss Le Zinc!" seems to be the most common pronouncement upon entering Blaue Gans, the prolific restaurateur Kurt Gutenbrunner's latest spot. But operating under the spectre of a dearly departed bistro doesn't seem to bother Gutenbrunner. He's practically begged for the comparison, given that he left the distinctive space—long zinc bar, vintage art and film posters—entirely intact. Perhaps he was hoping no one would even notice it was new. Before the restaurant opened, in early December, he widely proclaimed his intention to keep it "under the radar." Other elements in this strategy were no phone number, no menus, and no reservations. A phone number and menus have since appeared (a wise decision, in the latter case, given the tongue-twisting German names of *all* the dishes; the waiters can sometimes barely stammer out the specials, much less an entire slate of items).

But Blaue Gans also has an authentic sense of self, seemingly confirmed by the number of German-speaking diners. And even the English speakers get into it. With a word like *Schweinsbraten* (a rich, roasted pig's belly), who can resist attempting to roll it off the tongue? These are mostly traditional offerings, like goulash and Wiener schnitzel, but the chef, Martin Pirker, who also spent time in Gutenbrunner's kitchen at Wallsé, creates a bit of surprise in every dish. The *Räucherforelle* layers a frothy mixture of smoked trout, crème fraîche, and horseradish between delicate crêpes to make a slice of savory cake; a grilled-vegetable terrine is topped with a vibrant, intensely flavored jellied tomato. Entrées reinterpret the meaning of *Klassiker*—in the *Kavalierspitz*, the boiled beef has the perfect texture between tender and mushy, and the creamed spinach turns out to be a bowlful of addictively buttery, neon-green purée.

The most pleasing discovery might be the dessert list. One night, it included *Kaiserschmarren* ("the Emperor's pancakes"), a doughnut-like batter wrapped around rum-raisin filling and accompanied by a caramelized apple. "The legend goes that the dish was a chef's mistake—a delicious mistake," the waiter explained. But it's the *Salzburger Nockerl*, a light soufflé, still warm from the oven, set over a pool of tart huckleberries, that banishes any lingering ghosts of restaurants past. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $18-$29.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ELLEN BROOKS
The judicial penalties that dog and deter any contemporary depiction of childhood sexuality give Brooks's classically austere, black-and-white photographs of nude adolescents an outlaw aura. But the work, originally exhibited in 1976, comes from a different era, and it retains both a determined innocence and a foreboding sense that that time was almost up. Posed casually against draped backdrops, the kids seem at once vulnerable and self-possessed. They look us right in the eye. Do we dare look back? Through Feb. 18. (Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

JOSÉ GURVICH
Gurvich (1927-74) is a fascinating New World hybrid. Born in Lithuania and transplanted to Uruguay, he combined Chagall's visionary village surrealism with the craft technique of Latin-American peasants and the outpost-modernism of urban Montevideo. Paintings crammed with overlapping figures depict a "Universe of Images" and human experience. Beautifully sculpted, unglazed ceramic figures resemble ancient fertility totems, kachina dolls, and *milagros*. While Gurvich's work teeters on the precipice of folk art, it reminds us that much of what cosmopolitan European artists "discovered" in the early part of the twentieth century was actually a reworking of ancient and vernacular forms. Through Feb. 28. (Americas Society, 680 Park Ave. 212-249-8950.)

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE / EIJA-LIISA AHTILA
A pair of elaborate videos showcase two very different sensibilities. Kentridge exhibits some fifty working drawings in his signature velvety charcoal documenting designs for a full-scale production of Mozart's "Magic Flute," which Kentridge directed in Brussels last year. There is also a charming model theatre, complete with front- and rear-projected scenery and recorded opera. In the adjoining gallery, Ahtila's lushly colorful four-channel video, "The Hour of Prayer," moves from the death of a beloved canine to a fragmented essay on displacement. A pensive blonde narrates while images ranging from Manhattan in a blizzard to dogs howling at church bells in Benin cycle by. Through Feb. 25. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

RICHARD TUTTLE
Half of a two-part show of works on paper. Through Feb. 18. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677; see the Downtown listings for Nyehaus.)

"DUTCH TREATS: CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS"
This selection of original picture-book art comes to us from the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Massachusetts, which was named for (and co-founded by) the author of "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." On display are drawings and paintings by fourteen artists, including studies of Dick Bruna's dot-eyed bunny, Miffy. Through Feb. 24. (UBS Gallery, 1285 Sixth Ave. 212-713-2885.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

JOSEPH GRIGELY
Textbook notions of synesthesia can be a too-easy route for artistic contemplation, but Grigely's work exploring the sense of hearing (he has been deaf since childhood) lends a deeper significance to the theme. Wonderful fragments of written communication have functioned as the core of his oeuvre, and a few are included here on paper plates, doilies, and coasters. The rest is a departure into sculpture, with varying degrees of success. A video of the artist singing snippets of ad jingles and the "Gilligan's Island" theme song provides a poignant record of how cultural residue can be indelibly printed on aural memory. A porcelain chandelier and mantelpiece made in collaboration with Amy Vogel, while lovely, are less evocative. Through Feb. 18. (Cohan and Leslie, 138 Tenth Ave. 212-206-8710.)

BENDIX HARMS
Harms is an apt representative for the sincerity generation of painters, with canvases full of clumsy, lovable figures, anthropomorphic animals, and lots of hearts. A man cries fat tears over a dead bird; an airplane becomes a lover—or perhaps just an object of unbridled affection—in "Boeingbändiger"; birds and humans share a bath in "Endstation Old Garge." A recurring owl motif and moody colors demonstrate the artist's allegiance to traditional Teutonic melancholy, but it's expressed here with emotions almost as sappily sentimental as a greeting card. Through Feb. 25. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

JORG IMMENDORFF
Immendorff's pre-unification series of paintings, "Café Deutschland" (1977-89), imagines a hallucinatory drinking hole on the border of East and West Germany, a place where art, ideology, and history meet. Formally, the canvases mix the electric palette of Expressionism with the dense figurative and textual mayhem of Futurists like Severini. Official motifs and personages, from the emblematic German eagle to the Kaiser and Hitler, occupy barstools alongside punk rockers and art peers like A. R. Penck. A suite of gouaches furthers the theme. Through Feb. 18. (Rubenstein, 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000.)

MCDERMOTT & MCGOUGH
America's version of Gilbert and George is the duo David McDermott and Peter McGough, whose approach to "living sculpture" is to adopt the dress and customs of different eras and investigate their respective relationships with queer culture. Now they've invaded fifties America, creating a body of work that nods heavily to Pop art. Connoisseurs of kitsch memorabilia will feel at home among the brightly painted canvases of classic superheroes, Charles Atlas ads, wrestling schematics, and B-movie promos. It's an effective catalogue of fifties masculinity—both the mainstream and the coded forms that covered "deviancy"—but Todd Haynes's Douglas Sirk-styled melodrama, "Far from Heaven" (2002), and the discourse sur-

rounding its release, beat them to it. Through Feb. 11. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

JUERGEN TELLER
Teller, who made his name as a fashion photographer, has filled his recent gallery shows with more autobiographical work. For this exhibition, pictures of his young son and daughter are hung along with several nude self-portraits (in one, he is reduced to a jutting erection alongside his wife's pregnant belly), all of which are juxtaposed with shots of weeds growing in the abandoned Nazi parade grounds at Nuremberg. Teller grew up there and lives nearby now, so personal and national histories come together in his work, and the result has a kind of rude charm. Through Feb. 11. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

NICK WAPLINGTON
For his first New York solo exhibition in six years, Waplington, a British photographer who's been covering youth culture, working-class domesticity, and his own bohemian odyssey since the early nineteen-eighties, shows color work that touches on the full range of his concerns. His pictures of protest demonstrations, rock concerts, an empty disco, a tidal pool, and the birth of his child—most from his new book, "You Love Life"—are in the funky but chic snapshot style he shares with Wolfgang Tillmans, Ryan McGinley, and Ari Marcopoulos. Through Feb. 11. (Roebling Hall, 606 W. 26th St. 212-920-8180.)

Short List

EXENE CERVENKA: DCKT, 552 W. 24th St. 212-741-9955. Through Feb. 11. **ROY DECARAVA:** Jenkins Johnson, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-0707. Through March 11. **BERTIEN VAN MANEN:** Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Feb. 18. **ERWIN OLAF:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Feb. 18. **ROXY PAINE:** James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500. Through Feb. 25. **ALEC SOTH:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Feb. 25.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

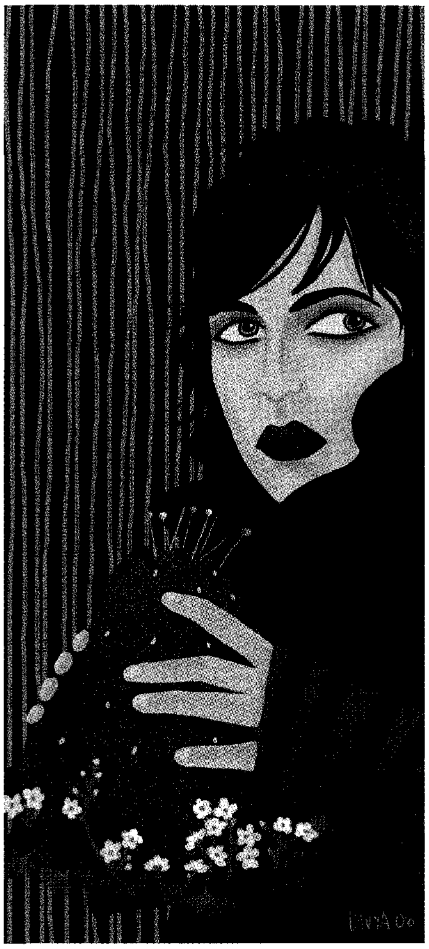
JAN GROOVER
Like William Eggleston and Stephen Shore, Groover is one of the photographers who helped give color prints art-world respectability in the nineteen-seventies. She did it most memorably with this elegant series of still-lifes, tweaking high modernism by tossing Edward Weston's pepper and other vegetables into artfully chaotic kitchen-counter closeups of cooking utensils, shells, and the occasional leaf. The spontaneity of Groover's gleaming, gorgeous assemblages may be an illusion, but their witty take on women's work isn't. Through Feb. 11. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166.)

Short List

RICHARD TUTTLE: Nyehaus, in the National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S., #8D. 212-995-1785. Through Feb. 18. **"THE DOWNTOWN SHOW: THE NEW YORK ART SCENE, 1974–1984":** Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Through April 1. **"THE MARTHA ROSLER LIBRARY":** E-flux, 53 Ludlow St. 212-619-3356. Through April 15.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Christopher Wheeldon's "After the Rain" (2005), a striking and emotion-filled ballet created for Wendy Whelan and Jock Soto (who retired last year), is difficult to forget; the intensity of its images is further magnified by Arvo Pärt's eloquently simple music. Whelan will be performing the pas de deux with a new partner starting Feb. 18. On Feb. 10, the company premières Peter Martins's new "Friandises," a ballet for a principal couple and a large corps set to music by the American composer Christopher Rouse, co-commissioned with the Juilliard School, which will present its own choreography later this month. In Jerome Robbins's "Fanfare," also being performed this week, the orchestra itself is the subject—the dancers mirror the qualities of musical instruments—while two Balanchine ballets, "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée' " and "Duo Concertant," both from 1972, highlight the choreographer's affinity for the music of Stravinsky. Casts are announced a week ahead of time on the company's Web site. ♦ Feb. 8 at 7:30: "Octet," "In the Night," and "Union Jack." ♦ Feb. 9 at 8 (an all-Robbins program): "Fancy Free," "In the Night," and "Fanfare." ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,' " "Friandises," and "Union Jack." ♦ Feb. 11 at 2: "Donizetti Variations," "Octet," and "Fancy Free." ♦ Feb. 11 at 8: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,' " "Duo Concertant," "Fanfare," and "An American in Paris." ♦ Feb. 12 at 3: "Donizetti Variations," "Songs of the Auvergne," and "An American in Paris." ♦ Feb. 14 at 7:30: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,' " "Duo Concertant," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Fanfare." ♦ Feb. 15 at 7:30: "Donizetti Variations," "Friandises," and "Fanfare." ♦ Feb. 16 at 8: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,' " "Tālā Gaisma," and "Western Symphony." ♦ Feb. 17 at 8: "Scènes de Ballet," "Tālā Gaisma," and "Union Jack." ♦ Feb. 18 at 2: "Scènes de Ballet," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Concertino," and "Western Symphony." ♦ Feb. 18 at 8: "After the Rain," "In the Night," and "Western Symphony." ♦ Feb. 19 at 3 (an all-Balanchine program): "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet" and "Union Jack." ♦ Feb. 21 at 7:30: "Tālā Gaisma," "The Cage," "Concertino," and "Union Jack." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Feb. 26.)



Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theatre presents "Zomboid!"

RONALD K. BROWN/EVIDENCE DANCE COMPANY
Brown founded his company twenty-one years ago, yet it's only in the past decade that he's discovered his voice. That blend of African and modern idioms counts as one of the most thrilling developments in recent American dance, even though the individual works Brown makes with it deviate only slightly from a single, devotional theme. His newest piece, "Order My Steps," is yet another variation of a prayer for guidance, but the unusually ethereal mood music at its center—the Kronos Quartet playing Terry Riley—provides a welcome contrast to the more customary Bob Marley surrounding it. The two anniversary programs also include "Walking Out the Dark," "Come Ye," "High Life," and "Grace." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Feb. 7-10 at 8, Feb. 11 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 12 at 2 and 7:30.)

HEATHER KRAVAS/ANTONIJA LIVINGSTONE AND PO.V.S. TANZE
Two little-known experimental duos—one Russian, one North American—offer an evening of premières at Dance Theatre Workshop. Kravas, a New York performance artist and choreographer, puts intensely repetitive movements into her collaboration with the Montreal-based Livingstone. A different section of their four-part dance is performed each night, to music by Moondog arranged by the cellist Okkyung Lee. The founders of the Moscow dance collective PO.V.S. Tanze, Albert Albert and Alexksandra Konnikova, dance their own "3petiX," which includes a wry solo in which the dancer plays suspect, victim, and detective. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 8-11 at 7:30.)

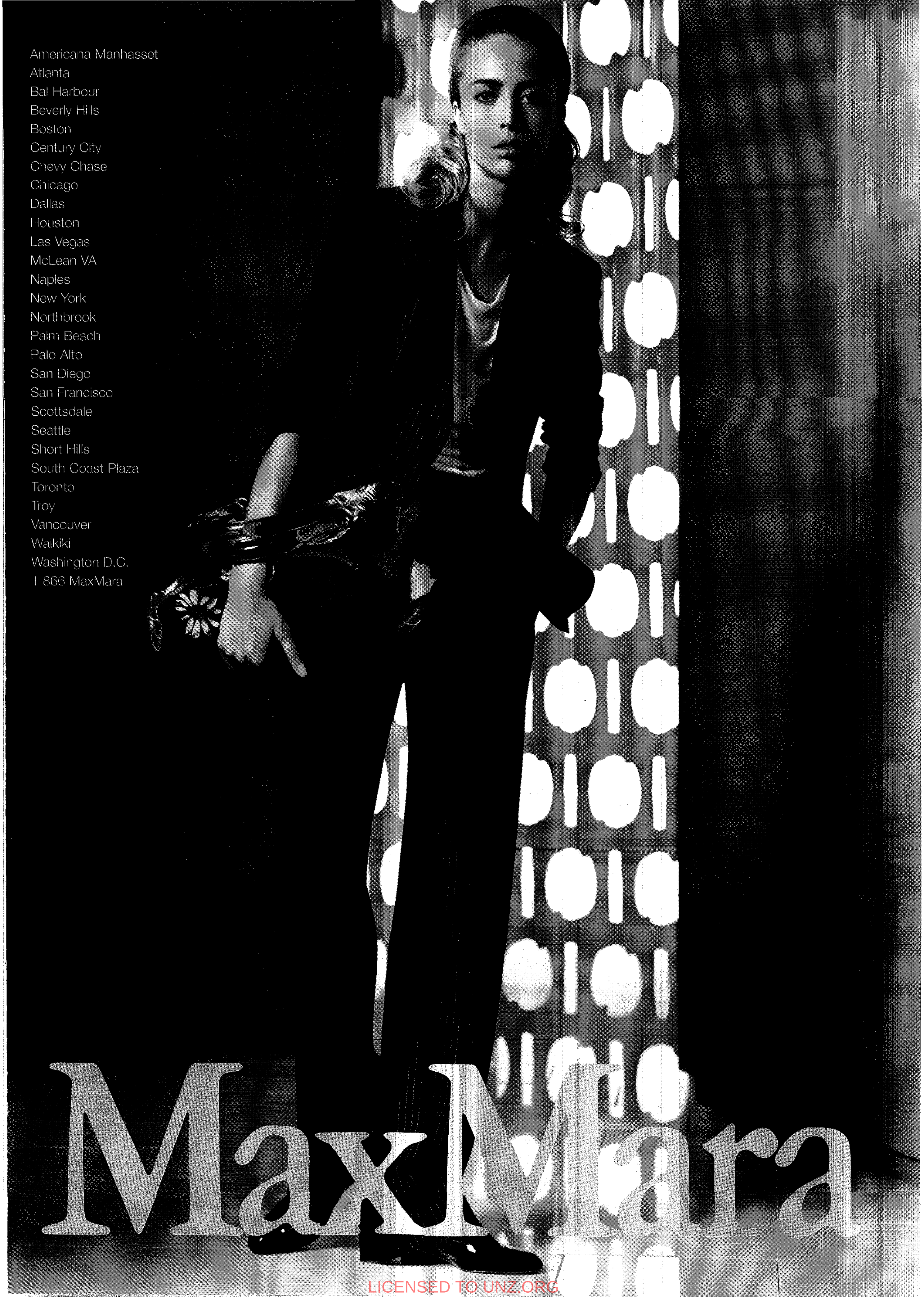
WILLIAMSWORKS
Todd Williams's company opens the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Festival with performances of two new works and an expanded version of another, all concerned with altered states of consciousness. "Value Intensity," a four-part piece (with a solo for Williams, a former N.Y.C.B. dancer), explores Jung's word-association tests and writings on dreams, while "Exquisite Corpse," a duet made in collaboration with the former Merce Cunningham dancer Glen Rumsey, is inspired by the Dadaist game in which infinite, surreal word combinations reveal unconscious thought. The dancers perform expansive arm gestures and leaps, fluid step combinations, and floor movements with ease and clarity, creating an impression of meticulous randomness. Original music will be performed live by John Toenjes. (Citigroup Theatre at the Alvin Ailey Studios, 405 W. 55th St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 8-9 and Feb. 11 at 8 and Feb. 12 at 2 and 7.)

LAVA
Sarah East Johnson's troupe of female acrobats concludes its run at the Flea. (41 White St. 212-352-3101. Feb. 9-11 and Feb. 16-18 at 7 and Feb. 12 and Feb. 19 at 5.)

RICHARD ALSTON DANCE COMPANY
After an auspicious New York début in 2004, the musical, scrupulous British choreographer brings his company back to the Joyce for a program of three New York premières. "Such Longing," inspired by Alston's first memory of watching Jerome Robbins's "Dances at a Gathering," is by Alston's own admission "the most romantic piece I've ever made." The pianist Jason Ridgway plays a selection of Nocturnes and Études onstage as the silver- and chestnut-clad dancers pass through plaintive solos and tender duets. The lush "Fever" (2001; set to Monteverdi madrigals) and the festive Balkan-techno "Gypsy Mixture" (2004) remind one that Alston isn't afraid to make dances that give old-fashioned pleasure. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Feb. 14-18 at 8 and Feb. 19 at 2.)

REGGIE WILSON/FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP
Wilson's unusually wide-ranging explorations of the African diaspora continue in "The Tale: Npinpee Nckutchie and the Tail of the Golden Dek."

DIVYA SRINIVASAN



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
END OF THE AFFAIR

The collaboration between Graham Greene and Carol Reed was one of the smoothest in cinematic history. Together they created "The Third Man," "Our Man in Havana," and, most tightly drawn of all, "The Fallen Idol" (1948), which runs at Film Forum Feb. 10-23. Ralph Richardson plays Baines, the butler at a foreign embassy in London. The ambassador has gone away, leaving his young son, Philippe (Bobby Henrey), in the care of Baines and the hectoring Mrs. Baines (Sonia Dresdel). The plot, deft and quick, is rich in secrets: Baines is in love with Julie (Michèle Morgan), an embassy typist, and their affair is witnessed, guarded, and unwittingly betrayed by Philippe, with Reed coaxing a display of near-fatal innocence from his leading boy. As a study of the child who sees but cannot fully understand, the movie reaches back to Henry James's "What Maisie Knew," and as an introduction to the clammy grip of Greene it remains unsurpassed.

—Anthony Lane

Sexual attraction is his theme this time, the dancing a contrast between stomping energy and slow burn. Rituals run from Caribbean custom to "stepping"—not the flamboyant black-fraternity style, but a lesser-known, easy-grooving social dance. A live vocal quartet sings traditional songs, adding to a recorded score of contemporary pop, thirties jazz, and other sounds of desire. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 15-18 at 7:30. Through Feb. 25.)

NEW YORK FLAMENCO FESTIVAL 2006
The dance portion of this year's festival opens with a sampler evening, directed by the master teacher Manolo Marín, that includes Merche Esmeralda and Soledad Barrio. Then come the ensembles. The first, Nuevo Ballet Español, is the newest in both age and sensibility, though its innovations remain confined to a few foreign instruments, some modern steps, and fancy lighting. Next, Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía, now directed by Cristina Hoyos (the star of many Carlos Saura films), presents a conventional large-scale flamenco ballet with "Viaje al Sur." Compañía Antonio El Pipa closes the festival with eternal verities: tradition (the *tablao* format) and family (Antonio's adorable aunt Juana). (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-545-7536. Feb. 15 at 7:30, Feb. 16-18 at 8, and Feb. 19 at 7. For a full schedule, see www.worldmusic.org.)

SALLY-ANNE FRIEDLAND DANCE DRAMA COMPANY
For the young Tel Aviv-based company's U.S. début, the 92nd Street Y, as part of the Harkness Festival, has commissioned a world première, "Borders," in which dancers in army-green tunics study the ground, bending to touch it at intervals. Using the racing cadences of Philip Glass's film score for "The Hours" as background, Friedland alternates sinuous hip circles with crisp, vaguely militaristic movements. "Red" (2004), an hour-long suite of dances about women, is a surreal blend of scarlet tutus, club shimmies, social-dance steps, and lipstick kisses. (Citigroup Theatre at the Alvin Ailey Studios, 405 W. 55th St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 15-16 and Feb. 18 at 8 and Feb. 19 at 2 and 7.)

"THE MONEY CONVERSATION"
The dancer-choreographer Sara Juli has structured her first full-evening show around a provocative stunt: over the course of six performances, she is giving away her entire savings (five thousand dollars) to members of the audience. Since Juli also provides a way for people to give the money back, if they wish, or to donate more, each show becomes a moral experiment. There's some movement, some humor, and a lot of audience participation, but a basic idea predominates: a compression of the everyday economic gamble made by all aspiring artists in the big, cruel city. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. Feb. 15-17 at 8:30, Feb. 18 at 4:30 and 8:30, and Feb. 19 at 4:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Feb. 8 at 7:30 and Feb. 11, Feb. 15, and Feb. 18 at 8: Verdi's **"Rigoletto"** returns with Carlo Guelfi in the title role. The glamorous Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón sing the roles of Gilda and the Duke; Plácido Domingo conducts a warm and sympathetic accompaniment. (Note: Youngok Shin replaces Netrebko in the Feb. 15 performance.) ♦ Feb. 9 and Feb. 13 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 1:30: **"Aida,"** with Andrea Gruber, Olga Borodina, and Johan Botha; James Conlon. (These are the final performances.) ♦ Feb. 10, Feb. 14, and Feb. 17 at 8: The mezzo-soprano Marina Domashenko and the tenor Clifton Forbis take the leading roles in the Met's colorful production of **"Samson et Dalila"**; Emmanuel Villaume. ♦ Feb. 11 at 1:30 and Feb. 16 at 8: The Zeffirelli production of **"La Traviata,"** recently brought to life by Renée Fleming, is now a vehicle for the magnetic Romanian soprano Angela Gheorghiu. Also with Jonas Kaufmann (making his Met début) and Anthony Michaels-Moore; Marco Armiliato. ♦ Feb. 20 at 8: Giancarlo del Monaco's old-school production of **"La Forza del Destino,"** a sprawling and far-fetched Romantic opera that stretched Verdi to his limits, is revived for Deborah Voigt and Salvatore Licitra, who head a cast that also includes Ildikó Komlósi, Mark Delavan, Juan Pons, and Samuel Ramey; Gianandrea Noseda. ♦ Feb. 21 at 8: The wonderful Natalie Dessay returns in Gounod's **"Romeo et Juliette,"** with a new tenor, Fernando de la Mora. Katharine Goeldner and Stéphane Degout are also featured; Bertrand de Billy. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel closes out the orchestra's Magic of Mozart Festival by conducting the Master's last three symphonies—Nos. 39, 40, and 41 ("Jupiter"). (Feb. 9 and Feb. 14 at 7:30, Feb. 10 at 2, and Feb. 11 at 8.) ♦ Maazel is no latecomer to the cause of Elliott Carter: he conducted the first Philharmonic performance of the composer's Variations for Orchestra (1955) back in 1972. He leads the work once more as part of a sprightly program that includes Brahms's "Haydn Variations," Kodály's "Dances of Galánta," and Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor (with Gil Shaham). (Feb. 16 at 7:30, Feb. 17 at 11 A.M., and Feb. 18 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.) ♦ Note: Shaham will also join members of the Philharmonic for a concert of chamber music by Beethoven at the 92nd Street Y. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 12 at 3.)

STAATSKAPELLE BERLIN
Daniel Barenboim, a smart and forceful conductor, has brought this cultural gem from the former East Berlin—an orchestra with a gorgeously burnished Old World sound—back up to international standards. They celebrate Mozart's birthday at Carnegie Hall with the pianist Radu Lupu. Feb. 11 at 8: Barenboim, a forthright pianist, joins Lupu for the Concerto for Two Pianos in E-Flat Major, K. 365, and conducts the Symphonies Nos. 39 and 41 ("Jupiter"). ♦ Feb. 12 at 2: Barenboim plays and conducts the Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat Major, the center of a program bookended by the two G Minor Symphonies (Nos. 25 and 40). ♦ Note: Lupu and Barenboim will offer a recital of duo-piano works by Mozart in Stern Auditorium on Feb. 20 at 8. (212-247-7800.)

ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA
Mariss Jansons, a reliable purveyor of virile and streamlined performances of standard repertory, leads his Amsterdam colleagues in two concerts at Carnegie Hall. Feb. 14 at 8: Shostakovich's epic Seventh Symphony, "Leningrad." ♦ Feb. 15 at 8: Haydn's nimble "Surprise" Symphony is a prelude to Strauss's grandiloquent "Ein Heldenleben." (212-247-7800.)

ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC
Both the orchestra and Zubin Mehta, its conductor for life, are nearing their seventieth birthdays, so why not celebrate? Lang Lang is the guest for the group's only U.S. appearance this season, performing works by Strauss, Ravel ("La Valse"), and Rachmaninoff (the Piano Concerto No. 3). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 16 at 7.)

OSVALDO GOLIJOV'S "LA PASIÓN SEGÚN SAN MARCOS"
This tumultuous work, a setting of the Passion of St. Mark that includes raucous Afro-Caribbean rhythms throughout and a haunting Hebraic Kaddish at the close, rocketed its composer to worldwide fame—and it must be heard. Robert Spano conducts the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the Schola Cantorum de Caracas. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Feb. 20-21 at 8.)

ANDRÁS SCHIFF AND CAPPELLA ANDREA BARCA
The most sensitive and insightful of pianists conducts and performs with his orchestra in the first of three Mozart tributes—the Piano Concertos Nos. 14-15 and the Horn Concerto in E-Flat Major, K. 495 (with the hornist Radovan Vlatkovic). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 21 at 8.)

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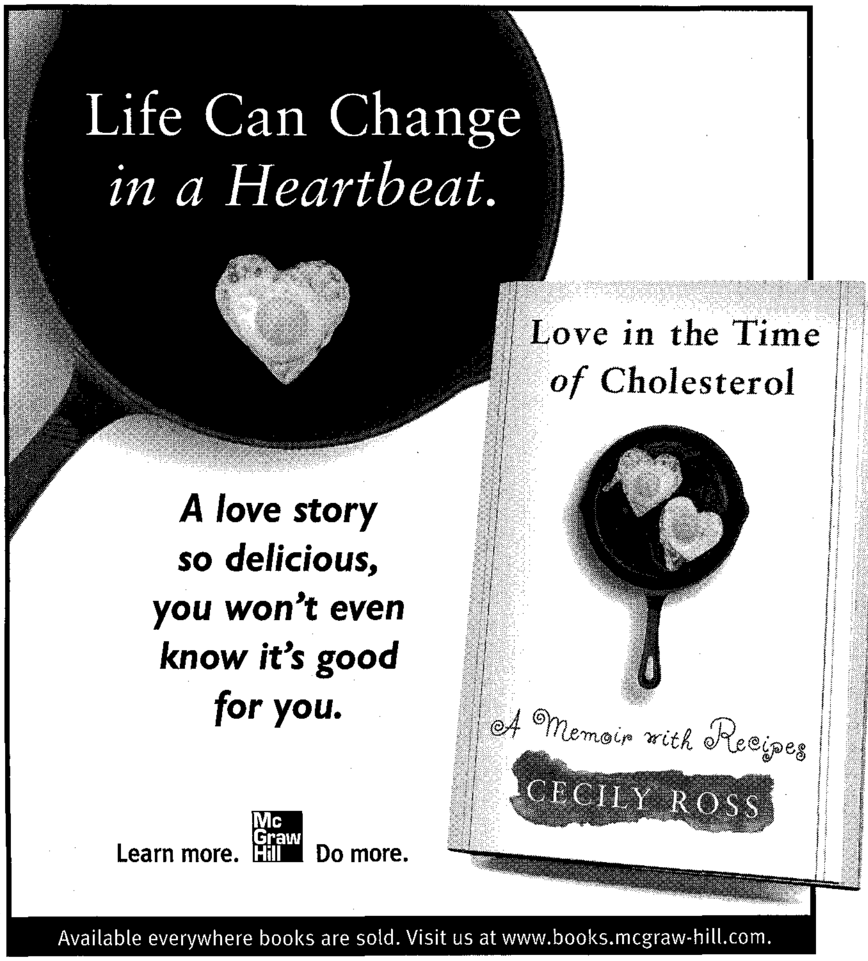

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RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Feb. 8 at 7:30: The society joins in the Osvaldo Golijov festival by presenting the clarinettist Todd Palmer and the St. Lawrence String Quartet—longtime advocates for the composer's music—in performances of "Yiddishbbuk" and "The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind"; the cellist David Finckel joins the St. Lawrence for Schubert's Quintet in C Major. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Feb. 16 at 6:45: More new music is offered on the latest "Double Exposure" concert, two performances of works by Keith Fitch, Anthony Gatto ("The Sheltering Sky"), and David Rakowski with refreshments offered in between. The performers include the cellist Clancy Newman and the clarinettist Alexander Fiterstein. (Rose Studio, Rose Building.) (212-875-5788.)

THOMAS MEGLIORANZA
The young baritone—a winner of the Concert Artists Guild competition—offers a concert of vocal works by such composers as Milton Babbitt, Aaron Jay Kernis, Russell Platt, and John Rommereim (a première). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Feb. 9 at 7:30.)

"MAKING MUSIC: STEVEN MACKEY"
When this Princeton composer was beginning his career, writing music influenced by rock and pop was heresy; now it's commonplace. The Prism Saxophone Quartet and the Brentano String Quartet—along with the composer, on electric guitar—will show why Mackey does it as well as anyone, with a selection of his works. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 9 at 7:30.)

SARI GRUBER
The Naumburg Foundation presents the young City Opera soprano, the winner of its 2005 International Vocal Award, in a recital featuring songs and entertainments by Wolf, Fauré, Bolcom, and Tom Lehrer. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Feb. 10 at 8.)

MUSIC FROM JAPAN FESTIVAL 2006
Feb. 11 at 8: The annual festival, a window on a culture at once modern and profoundly traditional, begins with a recital by the acclaimed *shakuhachi* virtuoso Akikazu Nakamura. ♦ Feb. 12 at 2: Nakamura is joined by a clutch of New York's best new-music pros (featuring the pianist Stephen Gosling and the violinist Tom Chiu) for an afternoon of works by five young Japanese composers. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: JAAP TER LINDEN
The renowned Dutch cellist and gamba player performs his first solo U.S. recital—Bach's Cello Suites Nos. 1, 4, and 5—in the city's most prestigious early-music series. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Feb. 12 at 4.)

DAWN UPSHAW AND RICHARD GOODE
The soprano and the pianist, both artists of nobility and refinement, perform Schoenberg's ravishingly atonal "Book of the Hanging Gardens," the finale of a concert that also includes piano works by Bach and Berg and a selection of Gesualdo madrigals (sung by the chamber choir Pomerium). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 12 at 7:30.)

FELICITY LOTT AND GRAHAM JOHNSON
Johnson, a big fan of thematic programming, accompanies the poised British soprano in "Fallen Women and Virtuous Wives," a concert of songs by Weill, Walton, Brahms, Fauré, and Noël Coward (among others). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 13 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
Michael Barrett and Steven Blier accompany an ensemble of singers (including the mezzo-soprano Alexandra Montano and the tenor William Ferguson) in "All Together Now," a program mixing music by Rossini, Monteverdi, and Mozart (among others) with tunes by Cy Coleman, the Beach Boys, and the Bobs. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Feb. 14-15 at 8.)

PAUL GROVES AND PEDJA MUZIJEVIC
The superb tenor-and-piano duo perform songs by Schubert, Lizst, and Strauss in the Baryshnikov Arts Center's Movado Hour, a salon-like concert series; refreshments will be offered a half hour

before the program. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. Feb. 16 at 7. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-218-7540.)

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM ARTISTS IN CONCERT
The exciting young ensemble, headed by the cellist Edward Arron, combines repertory favorites (including Dvořák's Bagatelles, Op. 47, and Schumann's Piano Quartet) with daring novelties (Schnittke's String Quartet No. 3 and Kancheli's "Rag-Gidon-Time," for string trio). (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. Feb. 17 at 8. For full schedule, see www.metmuseum.org.)

VOX VOCAL ENSEMBLE
George Steel conducts Miller Theatre's resident choral group in works by the sixteenth-century Flemish master Jacobus Vaet. (Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Columbus Ave. at 60th St. 212-854-7799. Feb. 18 at 8.)

"IN YOUR EAR TOO"
Three seasoned new-music pros—the pianist Nicolas Hodges, the violinist Geoff Nuttall, and the clarinettist Derek Bermel—perform a mix of music new (by Birtwistle and Bermel and a world-première work by Chris Paul Harman) and old (by Beethoven, Bartók, and Stravinsky). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 19 at 3. For full schedule, see www.carnegiehall.org.)

MOVIES OPENING

BATTLE IN HEAVEN
A sexually explicit melodrama about the relationship between a Mexican general's daughter and her chauffeur. Directed by Carlos Reygadas. In Spanish. Opening Feb. 17. (Sunshine Cinema.)

COWBOY DEL AMOR
In this documentary, directed by Michèle Ohayon, a cowboy helps American men make arranged marriages with Mexican women. Opening Feb. 10. (Cinema Village.)

C.S.A.: THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA
Kevin Willmott directed this mock documentary about life in America after the South's victory in the Civil War. Opening Feb. 15. (IFC Center.)

CURIOUS GEORGE
An animated version of the children's classic, directed by Matthew O'Callaghan, with Drew Barrymore voicing the impulsive monkey and Will Ferrell voicing the Man in the Yellow Hat. Opening Feb. 10. (In wide release.)

DATE MOVIE
Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer, who co-wrote "Scary Movie," wrote and directed this takeoff on romantic comedies. Opening Feb. 17. (In wide release.)

DESERT WIND
In this documentary, directed by François Kohler, thirteen men of diverse backgrounds travel through the Tunisian desert and reveal their deepest secrets. In French. Opening Feb. 15. (Film Forum.)

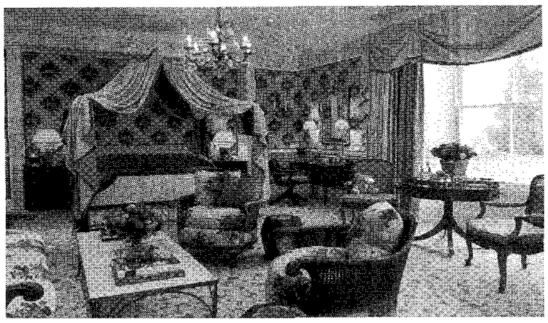
EIGHT BELOW
Frank Marshall directed this adventure film, about two Antarctic explorers on their own in the wild. Opening Feb. 17. (In wide release.)

FILM GEEK
James Westby wrote and directed this semiautobiographical comedy, about a film buff whose life crumbles when he loses his job at a video store. Opening Feb. 10. (Quad Cinema.)

FINAL DESTINATION 3
A horror film, directed by James Wong, about a high-school girl who foresees disaster at an amusement park. Opening Feb. 10. (In wide release.)

FIREWALL
A security executive whose family is kidnapped (Harrison Ford) must commit robbery to ransom them. Directed by Richard Loncraine. Opening Feb. 10. (In wide release.)

FREEDOMLAND
Richard Price's adaptation of his novel, about a white woman (Julianne Moore) who claims that a black man stole her car and child. Co-starring Samuel L. Jackson and Edie Falco. Directed by Joe Roth. Opening Feb. 17. (In wide release.)



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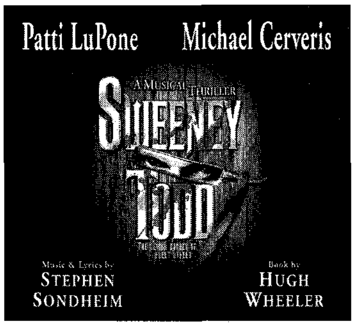
Words on Music

Borders music expert Brian McClemens says:
"The actors double as the musicians in this revelatory new Broadway production, bringing a fresh immediacy to Sondheim's score. Their vivid characterizations breathe new life into this modern classic, with Patti LuPone and Michael Cerveris turning in delectibly diabolical performances."



NONESUCH

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BORDERS.

LONDON
Hunter Richards wrote and directed this drama, about a young man trying to keep his ex-girlfriend from leaving New York for London. Opening Feb. 10. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

LOVE
Vladan Nikolić directed this drama, about a Yugoslav hit man in New York. Opening Feb. 16. (Pioneer Theatre.)

NEIL YOUNG: HEART OF GOLD
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 10. (Union Square.)

NIGHT WATCH
Timur Bekmambetov directed this supernatural action thriller, about medieval forces of good and evil clashing in contemporary Moscow. In Russian. Opening Feb. 17. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE PINK PANTHER
Shawn Levy directed this prequel, starring Steve Martin as Inspector Clouseau and Kevin Kline as Chief Inspector Dreyfus. Opening Feb. 10. (In wide release.)

THROUGH THE FIRE
A documentary directed by Jonathan Hock, about the young Brooklyn basketball player Sebastian Telfair. Opening Feb. 10. (IFC Center and Magic Johnson Theatres.)

WINTER PASSING
Adam Rapp wrote and directed this drama, about an actress (Zooey Deschanel) who visits her estranged novelist father (Ed Harris) in the hope of acquiring his letters for publication. Opening Feb. 17. (In wide release.)

A YEAR WITHOUT LOVE
An Argentinean writer who has AIDS attempts to find love and investigate sadomasochism. Directed by Anahi Berneri. In Spanish. Opening Feb. 10. (Quad Cinema.)

POP NOTES
MONKEYS DO

In England, where the music press treats new musical acts with either heartless slagging or overheated praise (and little in between), Arctic Monkeys are, by consensus, the Next Big Thing. The extremely young Yorkshire quartet—the infuriatingly talented lead singer Alex Turner was infuriatingly nineteen when the record was made—generated a fast presence by giving away demos at their live shows and letting people download songs from both their Web site and a myspace.com page maintained by someone close to the band. This twenty-first-century approach has worked well, to put it mildly. Their first official release on an actual label, the spunky single "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor," entered the U.K. charts at No. 1 in October, and their delightful, fleet, and rackety album, **"Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not"** (Domino), recently became the fastest-selling début album in British history. The success is deserved, inasmuch as the album makes very few mistakes. In a short time, they have figured out what they do well and how to stick to it confidently, and they sound as easeful and robust as a band that's been putting out records for years. Their sound is of its time—Arctic Monkeys fit in with the sharp, fine-lined dance rock that is currently popular—but in Matt Helders, they have the most limber drummer of their class, and Turner comes fully equipped with a pleasantly rough voice, an actual personality, and a real songwriting gift. His lyrics will inevitably be called literary, if only because they often scan as complete sentences and sometimes stretch out over a whole verse. (The model for this is likely the work of Morrissey, a songwriter whose commas and parentheses have always been audible.) Turner writes about dance floors, bar fights, and other, bigger boys with resignation and barely concealed delight in his own wisdom. He sounds like he can get through a bad day just by knowing that at least he's figured out how unfair the world is: " 'Have you been drinking, son? You don't look old enough to me.' 'I'm sorry, officer, is there a certain age you're supposed to be? 'Cause nobody told me.' "

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

NOW PLAYING

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
In the summer of 1963, Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) herd the sheep on Brokeback Mountain, in Wyoming, and fall in love. Ang Lee's movie traces the ups and downs of that love over many years, making it clear that the downs are fated to outnumber the ups. The film has a curious motion to begin with, managing to seem at once hectic and sluggish; once the heroes start to grow up, however, and thus to struggle against their feelings, the story comes painfully alive, and the performances stretch toward the tragic. There is fine support from Anne Hathaway and Michelle Williams as the baffled wives of the two men, but the picture belongs to Ledger, whose downcast gaze and chewed-up words bear almost unbearable testimony to a heart under siege. Any attempt to promote this as an issue movie, gripped by an agenda, feels badly misplaced; the only issue here is the oldest and most sorrowful one of all.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/12/05.) (In wide release.)

BUBBLE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Sunshine Cinema.)

MANDERLAY
The second part of Lars von Trier's American trilogy is given added piquancy by the fact that he has yet to visit America. As with the first segment, "Dogville," the action—such as it is—takes place on a theatrical stage, bare but for a sprinkling of props. In this case, it represents a slave plantation in Alabama, where the old system of ownership has persisted into the nineteen-thirties. Into the fray comes Grace (Bryce Dallas Howard), who sets about freeing the slaves and giving them paid employment. But they are so conditioned to their former plight, and she is so fouled up in haughty good intentions, that the new dispensation grows even more wretched than the one it displaced. Only von Trier would think to hitch overheated political fury to a stripped-down dramatic technique, and only he could begin to get away with it. The result is numbing and infuriating, not least because you can imagine it becoming addictive. The one thing that snaps you awake is the shuddering energy of David Bowie's "Young Americans," sung over the final credits. John Hurt narrates in style. —*A.L.* (2/6/06) (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MATCH POINT
Woody Allen's new movie is set in upper-class contemporary London, where two impoverished outsiders—Chris Wilton (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), an Irish-born tennis pro, and Nola Rice (Scarlett Johansson), an unsuccessful young American actress—are both trying to marry into a very wealthy English family. At first, the conversational idiom is falsely debonair, the plot too easily manipulated. But then the two interlopers face each other in a bar and the movie takes off. Rhys Meyers, who has widely spaced blue eyes and a flattened upper lip, can look angelic or brutally calculating at will. Johansson, poured into a white dress, also has an unusual upper lip, curved and fleshy, and a low, smoky voice. What follows is the most passionate and explicitly erotic love scenes that Allen has ever directed. The movie's narrative scheme becomes urgent and will-driven in the manner of Dreiser: Chris suddenly has one woman too many on his hands. Against our better instincts, we are with this cold-blooded murderer every inch of the way.—*David Denby* (1/9/06) (In wide release.)

MUNICH
Steven Spielberg's latest film begins at the Olympic Games in 1972 with the kidnapping and killing of Israeli athletes. It then follows the Israelis' plan to eliminate those whom—rightly or wrongly—they suspect of having backed the attack. Eric Bana plays a Mossad agent who, leaving behind his case officer (Geoffrey Rush) and his pregnant wife (Ayelet Zurer), heads to Europe, where a band of his fellow-specialists join him in the quest for revenge. This, for all the director's well-oiled narrative skills, is largely a matter of statistics: the film starts to drag as the team works its way through eleven specified targets (plus the slaying of a Dutch hit woman, the most gratuitous scene that Spielberg has ever devised). There has been much inflamed debate over the movie's politics, but the efforts of Spielberg and his screenwriters, Tony Kushner and Eric Roth, to strike a balance—by gesturing to Palestinian grievances or to the assassins' own qualms—leave the film looking agonized and heavy. Good intentions, and a range of strong performances, are never quite enough to quicken the pulse.—*A.L.* (12/26/05 & 1/2/06) (In wide release.)

THE NEW WORLD
Terrence Malick's retelling of the Pocahontas story may be grounded in historical research, but it floats toward the airiness of legend. Colin Farrell plays Captain John Smith, who lands in 1607 at what will become Jamestown, Virginia. There he encounters a young tribal princess (Q'Orianka Kilcher) and falls in love with her—or, rather, with the purity of body and spirit that she enshrines. This lasts until the outbreak of hostilities between the locals and the British; with peace restored and Smith reassigned, Pocahontas travels to England with her husband, John Rolfe (Christian Bale), and child. This final act is the consummation of the film's concerns, and of its semi-stoned amazement at the world. When Malick (with help from Mozart and Wagner) is at full blast, his peculiarities—the preference for monologue over conversation, and for lyrical meandering over forthright action—somehow fall into place.—*A.L.* (12/26/05 & 1/2/06) (In wide release.)

OH, UOMO (OH, MAN)
This analytically organized compilation of archival footage is nothing less than a horror documentary. The images, which show destitute Austrian children in 1918, dead Russian children in 1920, the mutilated faces and shattered bodies of veterans of the First World War, Mussolini rising to power, and his army invading Ethiopia in the nineteen-thirties, are almost unbearable to see. Though the devastations of war are painfully individualized, its violence is left generic: whether the work of artillery shells or land mines, machine guns or bayonets, the destruction of the body is presented as the woeful lot of mankind itself. The filmmakers, Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, who are based in Italy, reverse the chronological order of events, putting the Fascist-era material up front and printing it as negative, in order to bring to life a profoundly disturbing idea: the appalling casualties of today are born of the political monstrosities of tomorrow.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 13 and Feb. 18.)

THE SECRET CHILD
A young man, Jean-Baptiste (Henri de Maublanc), meets a young woman, Elie (Anne Wiazemsky), and casts her as the lead in his film about their relationship. A bad acid trip lands him in an asylum, where he is subjected to shock treatment, after which he has to recover his memory, his character, and the artistic energy that becomes the source of his self-rediscovery. While pursuing his work and his tense connection with Elie, Jean-Baptiste is forced to confront her increasing dependence on heroin. Philippe Garrel's film, from 1982, parallels the director's own experience with the singer and model Nico and her battle with drug ad-

diction. Garrel films with a raw fury, as if he were tearing his life's wounds open for the camera in order to cleanse them—including those that he incurred while making the film. Struggling toward a desperate lucidity, Garrel breaks through to an astonishingly concise crescendo, a heartbreaking avowal of romantic submission and self-sacrifice. In French.—*R.B.* (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 10 and Feb. 13.)

THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA

For his début as a movie director, Tommy Lee Jones has turned to a script by Guillermo Arriaga for a story that is set on the Texas border with Mexico. Jones also plays the lead, a ranch hand called Pete Perkins, who is in mourning for his colleague Melquiades (Julio Cesar Cedillo). Slowly, we work out what happened: Melquiades was accidentally shot by Mike Norton (Barry Pepper), a Border Patrol officer, who has sought to conceal his mistake. The second half of the film sees the two men transport the dead body back to Mexico for a decent burial, but the wandering grotesquerie of their trek feels poorly judged; what stays with you is the tone, at once melancholy and fractious, that Jones sustains in the earlier scenes, notably those involving Norton's wife, Lou Ann (January Jones), and Rachel (Melissa Leo), a waitress at the local diner. The movie's time scheme is deliberately choppy—too much so, perhaps, since what we look to Jones for, whether as a rookie director or as a long-standing star, is not a box of tricks but a serene and smiling despair.—*A.L.* (2/6/06) (In wide release.)

TRISTRAM SHANDY: A COCK AND BULL STORY

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION

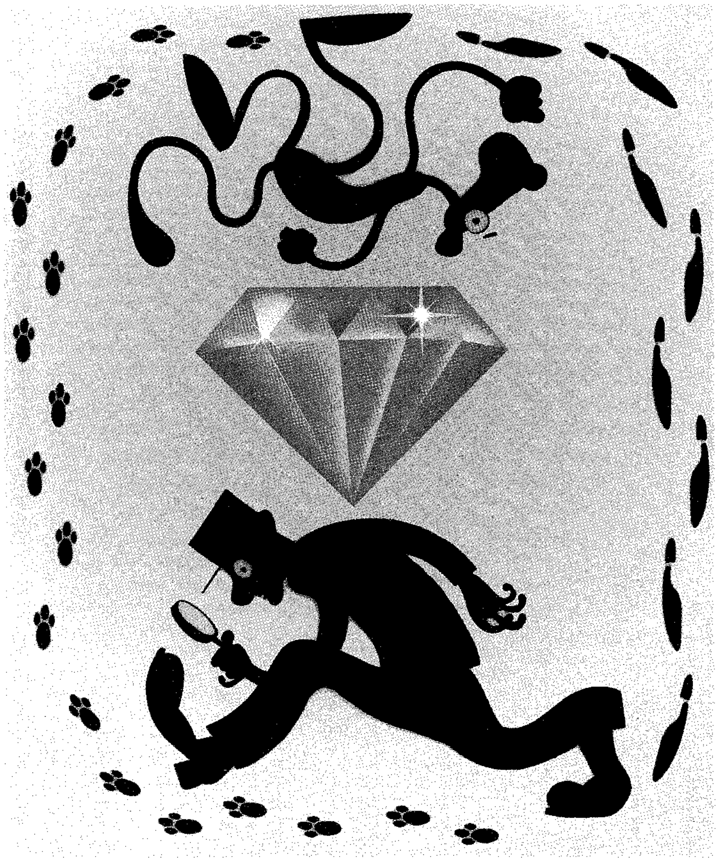
Len Wiseman's pumped-up sequel to his surprise 2003 vampires-versus-werewolves hit delivers the same goth-fuelled action as its predecessor, and that's enough to sustain its blood-and-leather-loving fan base. Kate Beckinsale returns as Selene, the vampire warrior, and Scott Speedman sulks again as her lycanthrope love interest. The hot couple engage in sensationally exciting battles against all manner of foes.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

WHY WE FIGHT

Isn't it time to retire the collage method of putting documentaries together? This intended indictment of American militarism and imperialism is mainly a display of second-rate film-editing technique. The director, Eugene Jarecki, argues that we are at war in Iraq because, with the exception of the Eisenhower years, we have always been at war, someplace or other, on some excuse or other, since Harry Truman was President, and that we have to be perpetually at war in order to stoke what Eisenhower, in his famous 1961 farewell address, called the "military-industrial complex." Jarecki has an interesting hero—a retired New York cop named Wilton Sekzer who lost his son on 9/11 and who demanded that the U.S. take revenge on Iraq. The story of Sekzer's grief, and of his subsequent disillusionment when he realized there was, in fact, no terrorist-Saddam connection, is a primal drama of considerable power. But the rest of the movie is made up of simplistic, historically ignorant attacks on America as imperialist nation, interspersed with kudzu-like patches of ideological montage.—*D.D.* (1/23 & 30/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CAPOTE: In wide release (10/10/05). **GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK:** In wide release (10/10/05). **SYRIANA:** In wide release (12/5/05).



Steve Martin stars in "The Pink Panther," opening Feb. 10.

ZOHAR LAZAR

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." Feb. 8 at 7: Short-film program. Feb. 8 at 8: "Everyone's Depressed" (2002, Yanna Kroyt Brandt). ♦ Feb. 15 at 7: Short-film program. Feb. 15 at 8: "Hallowed" (2005, Rocky Costanzo). ♦ From the archives. Feb. 8 at 8: "Toby and the Tall Corn" (1954, Richard Leacock) and "Cabin Field" (2005, Laura Kissel). ♦ Special screening. Feb. 9 at 7: "Sherman's March" (1986, Ross McElwee). ♦ "Avant-Garde Features." Feb. 9 at 8, Feb. 11 at 6, and Feb. 12 at 9: "Georg" (1964, Stanton Kaye) and "The Wind Is Driving Him Toward the Open Sea" (1968, David Brooks). ♦ Feb. 10 at 8, Feb. 11 at 8:30, and Feb. 12 at 6: "Ice" (1969, Robert Kramer). ♦ New York première. Feb. 10-16 at 7: "The Ister" (2004, David Barison and Daniel Ross). ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." Feb. 16 at 8: "Mystery Men" (1999, Kinka Usher). ♦ "Flux-fest." Feb. 17 at 7 and Feb. 19 at 9: Fluxfilm anthology. ♦ Feb. 17 at 9:30: "Zefiro Torna" (1992, Jonas Mekas). ♦ Feb. 18 at 7: Fragments of Fluxus. ♦ Special screening. "Assunta Spina" (1915, Gustavo Serena; silent), accompanied by live music and a poetry recitation. ♦ "Chess and Surrealism." Feb. 18 at 5: "8 x 8" (1955-58, Hans Richter). ♦ Feb. 18-19 at 8: Program of short silent films, including "Entr'acte" (1924, René Clair), "Anemic Cinema" (1926, Marcel Duchamp), and "At Land" (1944, Maya Deren), with musical performances by Margaret Leng Tan. ♦ Feb. 19 at 5: "Dreams That Money Can Buy" (1946, Richter).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Valentine's Day screenings. Feb. 14 at 7 and 9:30: "Ball of Fire" (1941, Howard Hawks). ♦ Through Feb. 22: The Best of the African Diaspora Film Festival. Feb. 17 at 2: Short-film program. ♦ Feb. 17 at 4:30 and Feb. 18 at 9:15: "Boy Called Twist" (2004, Tim Greene). ♦ Feb. 17 at 7: "Maluala" (1979, Sergio Giral; in Spanish) and "African Blood" (2005, Roberto Olivares; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 17 at 9:30: "The Dinner" (1997, Bernie Casey) and "Slave Reparations: The Final Passage" (2004, John Eisler), followed by a Q. & A. with Eisler. ♦ Feb. 18 at 2 and Feb. 21 at 6:50: "Faces of Change" (2005, Michèle Stephenson; in English, French, Tamil, Portuguese, and Bulgarian), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Feb. 18 at 4:30 and Feb. 20 at 9:15: "Radio Favela" (2002, Helvecio Ratton; in Portuguese) and "Soul in the Eye" (1978, Zózimo Bulbul; silent). ♦ Feb. 18 at 6:50 and Feb. 21 at 9:15: "Nina Simone, Love Sorceress" (2000, René Letzgus; in English and French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 2 and Feb. 21 at 4:30: "Arthur! A Celebration of Life" (2005, Joe James), followed by a Q. & A. with the producers, Sonny Howard and Terry Cyrus. ♦ Feb. 19-20 at 4:30: "The Importance of Being Elegant" (2004, George Amponsah and Cosima Spender; in French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 6:50: "On the Verge of a Fever" (2004, John L'Ecuyer; in French), followed by a Q. & A. with the actress Mireille Métellus. ♦ Feb. 19 at 9:30: "Tsotsi" (2005, Gavin Hood; in Zulu, Xhosa, and Afrikaans). ♦ Feb. 20 at 6:50: "Desamores" (2004, Edmundo H. Rodríguez; in Spanish).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Boris Karloff. Feb. 8 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "The Lost Patrol" (1934, John Ford). ♦ Feb. 8 at 2:30, 6, and 9:30: "The Criminal Code" (1931, Howard Hawks). ♦ Feb. 9 at 1, 4:30, and 8:20: "Targets" (1968, Peter Bogdanovich). ♦ Feb. 9 at 2:50, 6:20, and 10:30: "The Haunted Strangler" (1958, Robert Day). The 6:20 screening will be introduced by the producer Richard Gordon. ♦ In revival. Feb. 10-21 at 1:20, 3:15, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "The Fallen Idol" (1948, Carol Reed).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Feb. 28: "To Murder the Cinema: The Films of Marguerite Duras." All films are in French. Feb. 14 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Cet Amour-Là" (1984, Josée Dayan). ♦ Feb. 21 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "India Song" (1975, Duras).

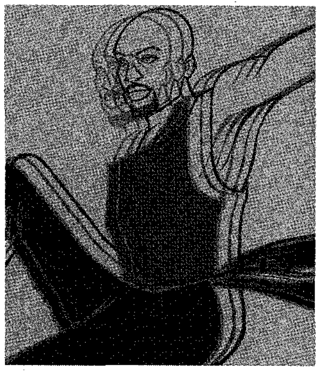
IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Feb. 10-11: "Goodfellas" (1990, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Feb. 17-19: "Cape Fear" (1991, Scorsese). ♦ "Weekend Classics." A series of films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Feb. 11-12 at noon: "Effi Briest" (1974; in German). ♦ Feb. 18-20 at noon: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1974; in German and Arabic).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Global Lens, 2006," a series of films from developing countries. ♦ Feb. 8 at 6 and Feb. 9 at 8: "The Night of Truth" (2004, Fanta Régina Nacro; in French, Mòoré, and Dioula). ♦ Feb. 8 at 8:30 and Feb. 18 at 4: "Stolen Life" (2005, Li Shaohong; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 9 at 6, Feb. 10 at 8:30, Feb. 11 at 8, Feb. 12 at 6, Feb. 13 at 6, and Feb. 15 at 8: "Cinema, Aspirins, and Vultures" (2004, Marcelo Gomes; in Portuguese). ♦ Feb. 11 at 2: "Max and Mona" (2004, Teddy Mattera; in Tswana, Afrikaans, Zulu, and English). ♦ Feb. 11 at 4: "Border Café" (2005, Kambozia Partovi; in Farsi, Greek, and Turkish). ♦ Feb. 11 at 6: "Almost Brothers" (2004, Lúcia Murat; in Portuguese). ♦ Feb. 16 at 6: Short-film program. ♦ Feb. 17 at 6: "In the Battlefields" (2004, Danielle Arbid; in Arabic). ♦ Feb. 20 at 3:30: "Thirst" (2004, Tawfik Abu Wael; in Arabic). ♦ Through Feb. 22: "How Yukong Moved the Mountains," a series of films about China from 1972-74 by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan. All films have English commentary. Feb. 8 at 8:30: "A Woman, a Family." ♦ Through March 13: "Documentary Fortnight." Feb. 9 at 6: "The Tenth Planet, a Single Life

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GETTING THE DIRT



HIROSHI TANABE

Ronald K. Brown is a child of Bedford-Stuyvesant, where his great-uncle founded the Trinity Zion Pentecostal Church of Christ, and his dances almost always have to do with spiritual matters. His "Walking Out the Dark" (2002), he says, takes place in a forest, where people—I think he means dead people—are struggling with "how they have walked and talked in the world." In his mind, as he made the piece, was a Burkina Faso initiation ceremony in which young men are buried in the earth overnight. The dance makes you feel that: not just weight, but the weight of dirt, your dirt. The style is based on African and Afro-Cuban forms, but Brown is American, and there's plenty of domestic material. His company pirouettes better than most ballet dancers. To celebrate the troupe's twentieth anniversary, Brown is presenting two programs at the Joyce, which will run through Feb. 12. "Walking Out the Dark," plus the big, beautiful "Grace" and a new work, "Order My Steps," will be on the first program. The second program will probably be just as good.

—Joan Acocella

in Baghdad" (2004, Melis Birder; in English and Arabic) and "Terror" (2005, Termite TV Collective), introduced by the directors. ♦ Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 11 at 2: "The Liberace of Baghdad" (2004, Sean McAllister; in English and Arabic). The Feb. 9 screening will be introduced by the director. ♦ Feb. 10 at 5: "The Women of Mount Ararat" (2004, Erwann Briand; in French). ♦ Feb. 11 at 4: A short-film program featuring "One Track Mind" (2005, Jeremy Workman) and "ParaUniVersesVersesVerses" (2003, Phyllis Baldino), introduced by the directors. ♦ Feb. 12 at 1: "God Plays Sax, the Devil Violin" (2004, Alexandra Gulea; in Romanian) and "Animated Minds" (2004, Andy Glynne). ♦ Feb. 12 at 3: "The Texture of Life" (2003, Ray and Judy Schmidt) and "Poumy" (2005, Sam Ball; in French), introduced by the directors. ♦ Feb. 13 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 2: "Oh, Uomo (Oh, Man)" (†). The Feb. 18 screening will be introduced by the directors. ♦ Feb. 15 at 6: "Three Rooms of Melancholia" (2004, Pirjo Honkasalo; in Finnish). ♦ Feb. 16 at 8:30 and Feb. 19 at 2: "Song's Inn" (2004, Yang Yun), introduced by the director. Feb. 17 at 6: "Moving Forward" (2005, Karen Zider; in English and Spanish), "I Am Alcántara" (2004, Gisela Sanders Alcántara; in Spanish), and "Tropic of Cancer" (2004, Eugenio Polgovsky; in Spanish), introduced by Zider and Alcántara. ♦ Feb. 17 at 8:30: "La Sierra" (2005, Scott Dalton and Margarita Martinez; in Spanish and English), followed by a panel discussion. ♦ Feb. 18 at 4: "Bachelor Farmer" (2005, Michael Culpepper and Nikki Draper) and "What Is Gay?" (2005, Jacqui Frost). ♦ Feb. 18 at 6: "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 1" (1968, William Greaves), introduced by the director. ♦ Feb. 18 at 8: "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2½" (2005, Greaves), introduced by the director. ♦ Feb. 19 at 4: "Czech Dream" (2004, Vit Klusak and Filip Remunda; in Czech) and "In Whose Name" (2004, Nandini Sikand), introduced by Sikand. ♦ Feb. 20 at 6: "Third World Newsreel: Call for Change (Part I)" (2005), introduced by Dorothy Thigpen, the director of Third World Newsreel, and the directors. ♦ Feb. 20 at 8:30: "Third World Newsreel: Call for Change (Part II)" (2005), introduced by Thigpen and the directors. ♦ "Prix Jean Vigo." All films are in French. Feb. 10 at 7 and Feb. 13 at 8:30: "Don't Forget You're Going to Die" (1995, Xavier Beauvois). ♦ Feb. 10 at 9:30 and Feb. 13 at 6:30: "The Secret Child" (†). ♦ Feb. 11 at 6 and Feb. 12 at 4: "The Gardener" (1980, Jean-Pierre Sentier). ♦ Feb. 11 at 8:15 and Feb. 12 at 1:30: "Breathless" (1960, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ Special screenings. Feb. 15 at 8:30, Feb. 16-17 at 8, Feb. 18 at 6, Feb. 19 at 5, and Feb. 20 at 8: "9 Drawings for Projection" (2005, William Kentridge). ♦ "A Few Moments with Eddie Cantor." Feb. 18 at 8: "Kid Boots" (1923, Frank Tuttle; silent) and a short film.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Black Light: Films from the African Diaspora." Preview screening. Feb. 10 at 7:30: "Tsotsi" (2005, Gavin Hood; in Zulu, Xhosa, and Afrikaans). ♦ "New York Film Critics Circle Series." Feb. 11 at 2: "The Yakuza" (1975, Sydney Pollack; in English and Japanese), introduced by Marshall Fine. ♦ Feb. 11 at 4:30: "My Beautiful Laundrette" (1985, Stephen Frears), introduced by Gene Seymour. ♦ Feb. 11-12 at 6:30: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1974, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German and Arabic). The Feb. 11 screening will be introduced by Dennis Lim. ♦ Feb. 12 at 2: "The Brother from Another Planet" (1984, John Sayles), introduced by David Sterritt. ♦ Feb. 12 at 4:30: "Genghis Blues" (1999, Roko Belic), introduced by Lisa Schwarzbaum. ♦ Through Feb. 26: The films of Josephine Baker. Feb. 17 at 7:30, Feb. 18-19 at 4:30, Feb. 20-21 at 3: "La Revue des Revues" (1927, Joe Francis; silent). The Feb. 17 screening will be introduced by Geoffrey Holder. ♦ Feb. 18 at 2: "Zouzou" (1934, Marc Allégret; in French), introduced by Jean-Claude Baker. ♦ Through Feb. 24: The films of Wallace & Gromit, directed by Nick Park. Feb. 19 at noon and Feb. 20-21 at 1:30: "A Grand Day Out" (1989), "The Wrong Trousers" (1993), and "A Close Shave" (1995).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—"NewFest Presents." Feb. 8 at 7: "Dixie Queen" (2004, Miles Christian Daniels) and "Drag Nuns in Tinseltown" (2004, Ren Blood). ♦ In revival. Feb. 8 at 9: "La Scorta" (1993, Ricky Tognazzi; in Italian). ♦ Feb. 9 at 9: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972, Bernardo Bertolucci; in English and French). ♦ Feb. 10 and Feb. 14 at 9: "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" (2004, Michel Gondry). ♦ Feb. 10 at 11: "Deep Throat" (1972, Gerard Damiano). ♦ Feb. 11 at midnight and Feb. 12 at 9: "Annie Hall" (1977, Woody Allen). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6:30: A short-film program. ♦ Feb. 13 at 9: "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975, Peter Weir). ♦ Feb. 17 at 11: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Special screenings. Feb. 10-11 at 7: "Side Effects" (2005, Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau). ♦ Feb. 15 at 9: "Gay Sex in the 70s" (2005, Joseph Lovett). ♦ Feb. 18-19 at 5: "Aristide and the Endless Revolution" (2005, Nicolas Rossier). ♦ Feb. 18 at 11: "The Ramones: End of the Century" (2003, Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia). ♦ Feb. 21 at 7: "Mardi Gras: Made in China" (2005, David Redmon; in Mandarin and English). ♦ "Bizarro Mondays." Feb. 13 at 7: "One Dark and Stormy Night," a short-film program. ♦ Feb. 20 at 7: "Bush's Brain" (2004, Joseph Mealey and Michael Paradies Shoob).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Feb. 10-11: "Harold and Maude" (1971, Hal Ashby). ♦ Feb. 17-19: "Donnie Darko: The Director's Cut" (2004, Richard Kelly).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Just Kidding!" Feb. 11 at 11 A.M. and 2: "Dumbo" (1941, Ben Sharpsteen). ♦ In revival. Feb. 12 at 4 and Feb. 14 at 8:15: "The Awful Truth" (1937, Leo McCarey). ♦ Feb. 12 at 5:45 and Feb. 14 at 6: "The Philadelphia Story" (1940, George Cukor). ♦ Feb. 19 at 4 and Feb. 21 at 7:45: "You Can't Take It with You" (1938, Frank Capra). ♦ Feb. 19 at 6:15 and Feb. 21 at 6: "The Palm Beach Story" (1942, Preston Sturges).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Film in Catalunya." All films are in Spanish except where noted. Feb. 8 at 1, Feb. 11 at 9:45, and Feb. 12 at 1: "In a Glass Cage" (1987, Agustí Villaronga). ♦ Feb. 8 at 3 and Feb. 11 at 3:30: "Warsaw Bridge" (1989, Pere Portabella). ♦ Feb. 9 at 2 and 9:30 and Feb. 12 at 7:30: "Anguish" (1987, Bigas Luna; in English). ♦ Feb. 9 at 4, Feb. 10 at 8:30, and Feb. 13 at 1: "Tapas" (2005, José Corbacho and Juan Cruz). ♦ Feb. 10 at 2 and 6:30: "Fausto 5.0" (2001, Álex Ollé, Isidro Ortiz, and Carlos Padrisa; in Cheyenne and Spanish). ♦ Feb. 10 at 4 and Feb. 11 at 1: "Work in Progress" (2001, José Luis Guerín; in Spanish and Catalan). ♦ Feb. 11 at 5:30 and Feb. 14 at 4:15: "Costa Brava" (1994, Marta Balletbò-Coll). ♦ Feb. 11 at 7:30 and Feb. 14 at 2:15 and 6:15: "East of the Compass" (2005, Jordi Torrent). ♦ Feb. 12 at 3: "Diamond Plaza" (1982, Francesc Betriú; in Spanish and Catalan). ♦ Feb. 12 at 5:30, Feb. 13 at 3, and Feb. 14 at 8:15: "Monkeys Like Becky" (1999, Joaquim Jordà and Núria Villazán; in Spanish, English, and Portuguese). ♦ Through Feb. 28: "*Film Comment* Selects." Feb. 15 at 1:45, Feb. 17 at 2:50 and 7:15, and Feb. 20 at 8: "That Day" (2003, Raúl Ruiz; in French). ♦ Feb. 15 at 4, Feb. 19 at 8:15, and Feb. 20 at 3:30: "Everlasting Regret" (2005, Stanley Kwan; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 15 at 6:30: "Stranded in Canton" (1974/2005, William Eggleston), introduced by the director. ♦ Opening-night presentation. Feb. 15 at 9:30: "Battle in Heaven" (2005, Carlos Reygadas; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 16 at 1:30, Feb. 18 at 7:15, and Feb. 21 at 2:15: "The Lost Domain" (2004, Ruiz; in French). ♦ Feb. 16 at 3:45, Feb. 17 at 9, and Feb. 20 at 1: "Shanghai Dreams" (2005, Wang Xiaoshuai; in Mandarin and Shanghainese). ♦ Feb. 16 at 9 and Feb. 17 at 1: "One Night" (2005, Niki Karimi; in Farsi). ♦ Feb. 17 at 5 and Feb. 19 at 6: "Eli, Eli, Lema Sabachtani?" (2005, Shinji Aoyama; in Japanese). ♦ Feb. 18 at 1: "Days in the Country" (2004, Ruiz; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 18 at 2:45: "Saratan" (2005, Ernest Abdyshaparov; in Kyrgyz). ♦ Feb. 18 at 4:45 and Feb. 21 at 6:30: "Workingman's Death" (2005, Michael Glawogger; in German, English, Ibo, Indonesian, Mandarin, and Russian). ♦ Feb. 18 at 9:30, Feb. 19 at 2, and Feb. 21 at 4:30: "Isolation" (2005, Billy O'Brien). ♦ Feb. 19 at 4 and Feb. 20 at 6: "Kinetta" (2005, Yorgos Lanthimos; in Greek). ♦ Feb. 21 at 9: "Bashing" (2005, Masahiro Kobayashi; in Japanese).

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READINGS AND TALKS

"A TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR MILLER"
Marian Seldes, Eli Wallach, Frances Sternhagen, Miller's sister, Joan Copeland, and others read scenes from "Death of a Salesman," "The Crucible," and other plays on the first anniversary of Miller's death. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 51st St. No tickets necessary. For more information, call 212-567-0666. Feb. 10 at 12:45.)

NATIONAL ARTS CLUB
Bruce Stutz, the former editor-in-chief of *Natural History*, offers selections from "Chasing Spring: An American Journey Through a Changing Season," his tale of a trip across the United States. The poet Eugene Ostashevsky will also read, from his collection, "Iterature." (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary. Feb. 10 at 7.)

"BOYS WILL BE GIRLS"
The Shakespeare Society returns to the sixteenth century as David Strathairn, Jefferson Mays, and Michael Cumpsty portray Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, and other female characters in an examination of cross-dressing in the time of the Bard. Members of the Queen's Company, who presented an all-woman version of "The Taming of the Shrew" last year, will also be on hand, as will Dympna Callaghan, the author of "Shakespeare Without Women." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. Feb. 13 at 6:30.)

KENNETH JACKSON
The historian and editor of "The Encyclopedia of New York City" discusses the history of, and prospects for, lower Manhattan. (John Street Methodist Church, 44 John St., between Nassau and William Sts. For reservations, which are suggested, call 212-835-2773. Feb. 16 at 7.)

ISSUE PROJECT ROOM
The actor Steve Buscemi and the poets Anne Waldman and Bob Holman visit this renovated silo alongside the Gowanus Canal for a night of Beat poetry. (400 Carroll St., Brooklyn. 718-330-0313. Feb. 20 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

BEST IN SHOW
Samoyeds, Cavalier King Charles spaniels, golden retrievers, Rhodesian ridgebacks, French bulldogs, dachshunds, and many other breeds come to town for the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, at Madison Square Garden. (Feb. 13-14. For more information, call 212-213-3165.)

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
Andy Friedman, a visual artist and contributor to this magazine, celebrates the release of his first album, "Live at the Bowery Poetry Club." Friedman, an erstwhile spoken-word artist who brings projections of his drawings onstage with him, counts the late folksinger Dave Van Ronk among his heroes. Lately he has given in to his passion for country music, singing (in a plainspoken way) with the help of a backing band, the Other Failures, and some shrewd harmonizing. The evening also features contributors to the literary magazine and Web site *Pindeldyboz*, which is celebrating the release of its latest issue. Douglas Light, Jason Napoli-Brooks, and Greg Sanders will read from their work. (308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. 212-614-0505. Feb. 17 at 8.)

DIRTY FOUND
The journal *Found* has collected accolades for showcasing notes, flyers, shopping lists, and snapshots that were rescued from trash bins, car windshields, and street corners. Its spinoff, *Dirty Found*, specializes in the same sort of ephemera, but of a decidedly more personal nature. *Dirty Found's* material was once hidden beneath mattresses, under pillows, and tucked away in sock drawers. Its Polaroid pictures, erotic doodles, and steamy love letters are exhibited live when the magazine's creators visit the Monkey Town bar and restaurant, in Williamsburg. (58 N. 3rd St., Brooklyn. 718-384-1369. Feb. 17-18 at 7:30 and 10.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Bobby Short's life was like a Cole Porter song, a slicked-back serenade composed of cocktails and grand pianos; some shimmering remnants of that world, including Short's black-lacquer Bechstein and a frightfully chic Cartier silver ice bucket, go on sale at **Christie's** on Feb. 16. The auction is preceded by sales of prints on Feb. 9-10, of photographs on Feb. 14, and of artful (and expensive) Lalique pieces from the collection of a Japanese art dealer, Tsuyoshi Kajikawa, on Feb. 10. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ At **Sotheby's**, the Metropolitan Museum is selling more than a hundred photographs (Feb. 14-15), many from the prestigious Gilman Paper collection; some, including Edward Steichen's stunningly beautiful "The Pond—Moonlight," are duplicates of works already at the museum. A series of five portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe taken over the years by Alfred Stieglitz capture the intimacy and respect that the two artists shared. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Swann's** winter sale of vintage posters (Feb. 9) includes not only a large selection of ski posters but also some fifty posters from Israel (including one that admonishes, "Buy Shekels—Make Us Stronger!"). (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
AUSTRALIAN IBSEN
Feb. 28

Cate Blanchett returns to her roots with the Sydney Theatre Company—she joined the troupe fresh out of drama school in 1992—to play the title role in "Hedda Gabler" at BAM. Hugo Weaving, Agent Smith in the "Matrix" films, co-stars. (718-636-4100.)

MOVIES
TRUTH AND BEAUTY
March 1-9

Such great French directors as Jean Vigo, Sacha Guitry, and Alain Resnais started out making documentaries, which are featured in a series of classic and recent French nonfiction films at the Walter Reade Theatre. The series also includes "Le Joli Mai," Chris Marker's 1962 study of Parisian moods at the end of the Algerian War, and "Reprise," from 1997, in which Hervé Le Roux films his search for a woman from a strike in 1968. (www.filmlinc.com; 212-875-5600.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MOST HAPPY
March 4-25

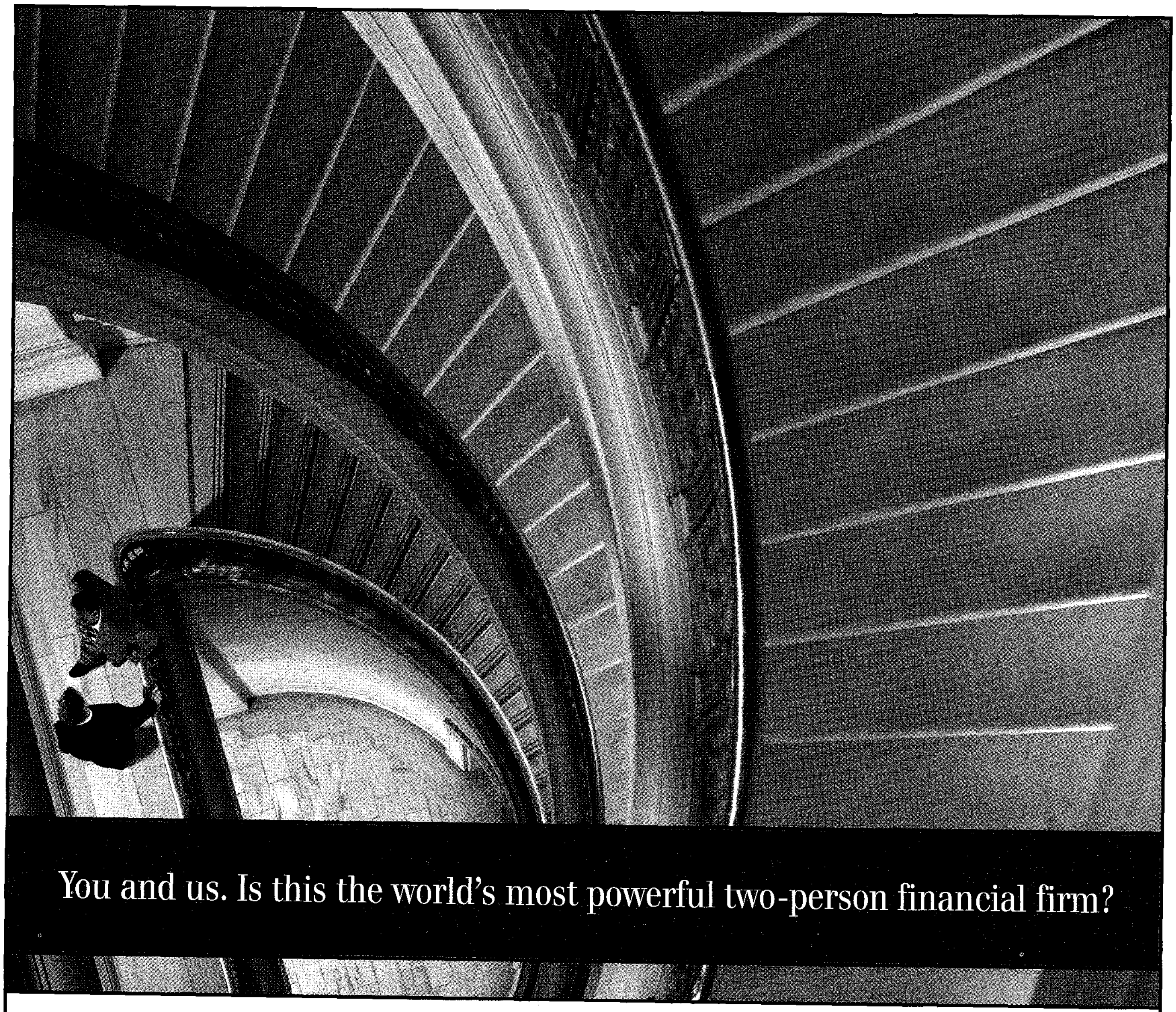
Paul Sorvino takes the title role of a California vintner hopelessly in love with a beautiful young waitress in City Opera's revival of Frank Loesser's almost-operatic musical "The Most Happy Fella," which originally opened in 1956. (212-721-6500.)

ART
"KLEE AND AMERICA"
March 9-May 22

At the same time that his work was being declared degenerate in Germany and Austria, Paul Klee was collecting an enthusiastic fan base in the United States. The Neue Galerie, in an exhibition co-organized with the Menil Collection and the Phillips Collection, will examine the prolific artist's success on this side of the Atlantic and will investigate the relationship between Native American art and Klee's particular brand of avant-garde art. (212-628-6200.)

NIGHT LIFE
FALL FROM GRACE
March 16-19

The long-running, hard-living Irish punk band the Pogues has put itself back together and is coming to the Nokia Theatre Times Square for a St. Patrick's Day performance. The band's front man, Shane MacGowan, is expected. (212-307-7171.)



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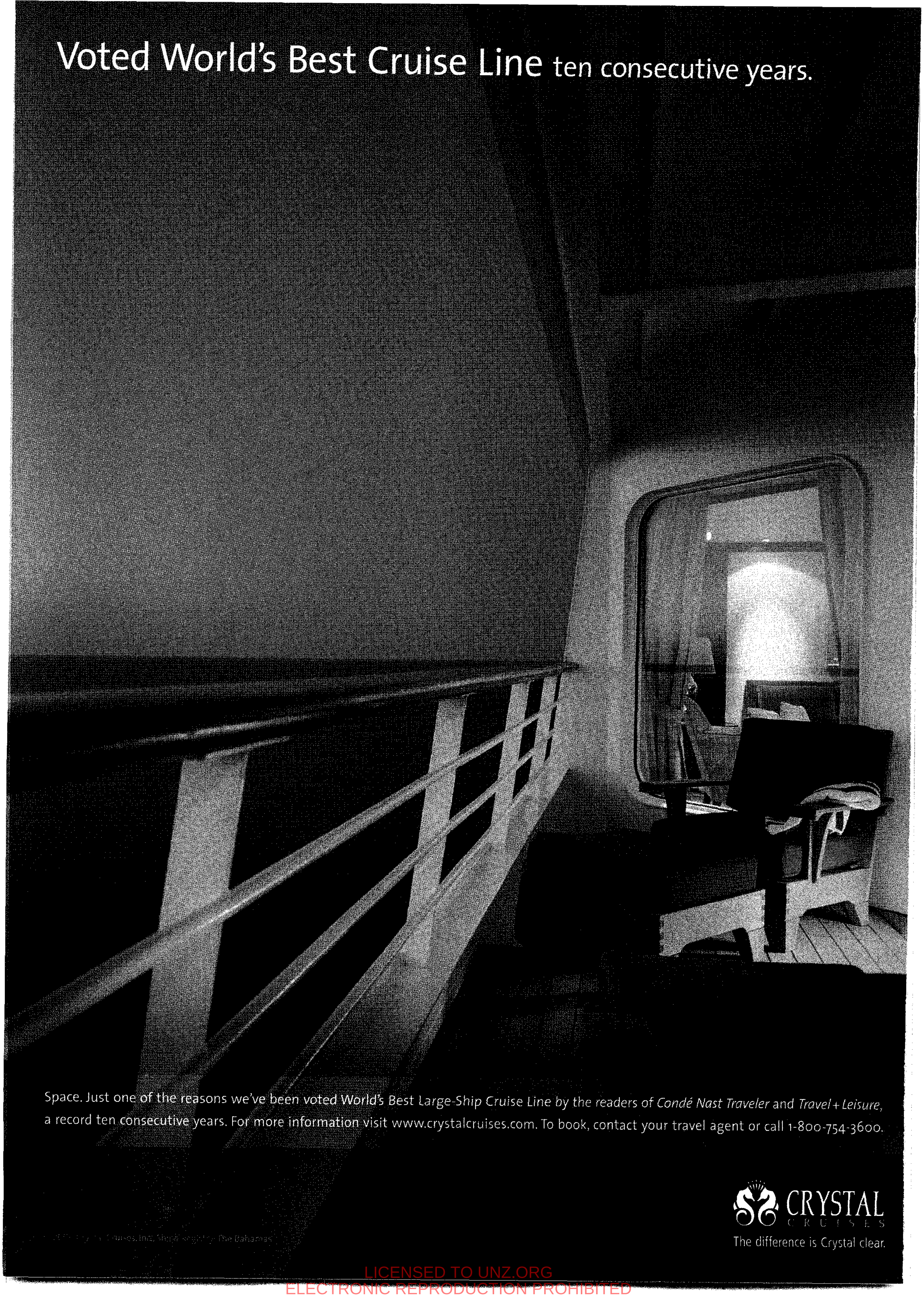
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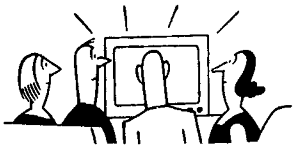
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

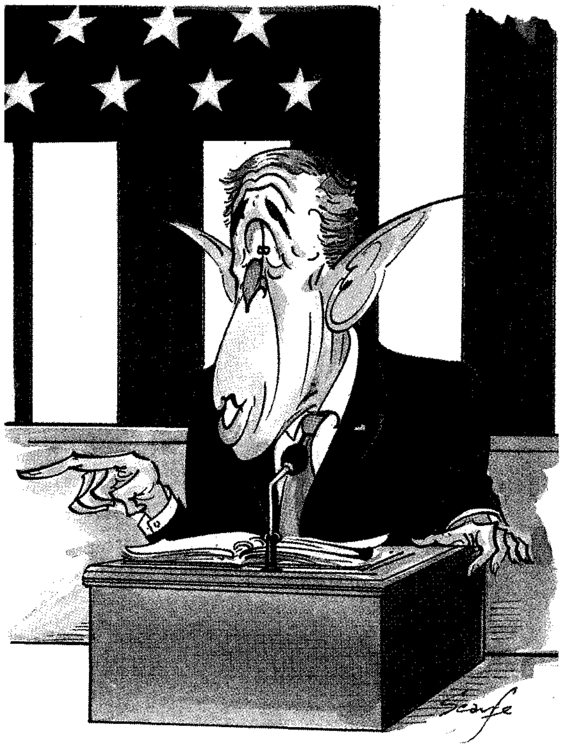
COMMENT
WAR AND WORDS



A President is well advised to choose his words carefully. This is something the incumbent, left to his own devices, is not always capable of doing. A State of the Union speech finesses that difficulty. The speaker speaks off the teleprompter, not the cuff. And the words that scroll down on the angled reflectors to his left and his right are as carefully—or, at any rate, as exhaustively—considered as bureaucratic thoroughness can make them. Every prepared Presidential address has multiple authors, but a State of the Union is the product of whole buildings full of them. The text that George W. Bush recited last Tuesday night had gone through thirty drafts.

It's safe to assume, therefore, that the President was not speaking casually when he identified America's mortal enemy as "radical Islam." This is the latest milestone in a wandering terminological journey that began shortly after September 11, 2001. "War on terror" has always been problematic, at both ends. The word "war" has the requisite urgency, and it has proved useful in intimidating the political opposition at home. But, as we have seen in Iraq and elsewhere, its associations—pitched battles, clashing states, disciplined armies with general staffs—can invite actions that are, at best, beside the point. "Terror" is not a conquerable enemy, or an end in itself. It is a method of achieving some political goal, however outlandish or unrealizable—an ugly and frightening method, as was the bombing of civilian populations in the Second World War. But "war on terror" is a chimerical circle, like "war to end all wars." Woodrow Wilson's war to end all wars defeated imperial Germany, but it did not, and could not, defeat war. Nor can a war on terror defeat terror.

Now and then over the past couple of years, the Administration has half-heartedly tried to shed the straitjacket of its own slogan. "We actually misnamed the war on terror," Bush mused in the summer of 2004. "It ought to be 'the struggle against ideological extremists who do not believe in free societies who happen to use terror as a weapon to try to shake the conscience of the free world.' " A year later, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a run at substituting the catchier "global struggle against violent extremism." It didn't fly. Bush, who had decided that he wants to be a war President, not a struggle President, shot it down. But "struggle" would at least have acknowledged that warfare is not the sole solution, and "violent extremism" would have recognized a motive behind the method.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE

Last October, speaking at the National Endowment for Democracy, the President returned to the topic, floating more names for the "focussed ideology" that brought down the Twin Towers. "Some call this evil Islamic radicalism," he said. "Others, militant jihadism; still others, Islamo-fascism." As of last week, he seemed to have settled on "radical Islam." It's a bad choice, reminiscent of his early talk of a "crusade." Violent jihadism, yes. Islamist (as distinct from Islamic) terrorism, yes. But not Islam, radical or otherwise.

There's no doubt, of course, that terrorists of the Al Qaeda ilk are drawn from the ranks of adherents of "radical"—which is to say, extreme or fundamentalist—Islam. But radical Islam is a far broader and more variegated phenomenon than the terrorist virus that infects it. Its incarnations range from Al Qaeda to the clerical and legal establishments of Saudi Arabia. In virtually every iteration, it demands the subordination of women, the stunting of education, and the curbing of the freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion. It should be opposed, as part of America's thirty-year-old campaign against violations of human rights. But it is not in and of itself a casus belli. Violence and terrorism are not intrinsic to it. And it is emphatically not something against which the United States should seek to fight a war to the death. One of Al Qaeda's goals has been to frame the conflict as a holy war between Muslims and infidels. In calling it a war, Bush emphasized its seriousness, but at the cost of granting its criminal perpetrators the dignity of warriors. Calling it a war against Islam, even radical Islam, grants them the other half of their wish.

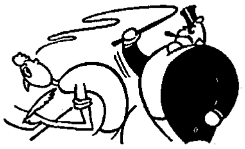
In the section of his speech devoted to the prospects for what he called "democratic reform across the broader Middle East," the President said, "The Palestinian people have voted in elections, and now the leaders of Hamas must recognize Israel, disarm, reject terrorism, and work for lasting peace." He was right to emphasize the aspects of Hamas's ideology that are inimical to peace, rather than calling on it to abandon its (radical) Islamic identity. But he skated lightly over the implications for his own policies of Hamas's victory in last month's Palestinian legislative elections. All over the region, the unintended consequences are piling up. The elections in Afghanistan, Egypt, and Lebanon were a good thing, but they resulted in gains for, respectively, warlords, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hezbollah. In Iraq, Bush asserted, "we are winning." But the war there, which shows no sign of ending, has stretched America's military to the limit, pinning it down while potentially more dangerous threats have gathered. The "weapons-of-mass-destruction-related-program activities" that Bush spoke of in his 2004 address have been found, but they turn out to be in Iran. And the Iranian theocracy—strengthened by high oil prices and an election in which a relatively moderate President was succeeded by a Holocaust denier—has won unprecedented influence in a strategically important neighboring country: Iraq.

On the related subject of homeland security, Bush had only two things to say. He demanded that Congress reauthorize—presumably without changing a word—the so-called Patriot Act, which was passed in haste shortly after the September 11th attacks. And he defended—no, boasted of—the National Security Agency's vast, formerly secret program of warrantless electronic eavesdropping, undertaken on his orders and rebranded in his speech as "the terrorist-surveillance program." "If there are people inside our country who are talking with Al Qaeda," he said, "we want to know about it, because we will not sit back and wait to be hit again." But those who are questioning Bush's program, both Democrats and Republicans, agree that terrorists must be surveilled. What alarms them is not just that the President is breaking a particular law, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, but that his rationale for doing so amounts to a claim that he can flout any law at all, as long as the flouting is under cover of an endless (and, according to him, misnamed) war.

The evening's only startling moment came when Bush announced that "America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world." This acknowledgment, as welcome as it was overdue, was followed by a call for an increase in federal funding of research into alternative fuels. For this, and for failing to renew his call for drilling in the Arctic wilderness, the President was quickly attacked in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial as a Jimmy Carter clone, a liberal, and a co-opter of Democratic ideas—a fairly good indicator that he may be on to something. But it soon became apparent that, while he may be a reformed drinker, he is not yet a reformed oilman. "The best way to break this addiction is through technology," he said. Whether or not it's the best way, it's the only way he mentioned. But relying solely on a cheap, painless technological fix to conquer oil addiction is like relying solely on methadone to conquer heroin addiction. Abstinence is needed, too. The energy equivalent is conservation, which is superior in every way to substitution. The best way to encourage conservation—and the true sign of a serious energy policy—would be imposing a hefty gasoline tax and raising mandatory fuel-efficiency standards. No points for guessing whether any such proposals found their way into the speech. Anyway, the subsidies Bush is proposing would, at best, restore research spending to its Clinton-era levels. Two days after the speech, the *Times* reported that the Energy Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory will begin laying off workers next week, thanks to a fifteen-per-cent cut in its current budget. The State of the Union address was a disappointment only to those who were foolish or forgetful enough to expect something better.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION
TRUMP V. TRUMP



Never having met Timothy O'Brien, the *Times* reporter who finds himself on the receiving end of a five-billion-dollar libel-and-defamation suit from Donald Trump, I don't presume to know whether he's having fun yet. But I doubt that I'm alone among members of the Fourth Estate in experiencing a twinge of envy. Talk about pennies from Heaven! Overnight, sales of O'Brien's book "TrumpNation," the vivisection of the alleged mogul which prompted the litigation, moved it from 123,329 to 466 in the Amazon.com rankings.

Trump's complaint says that O'Brien has damaged his business reputation by lowballing his net worth. According to *Forbes*, he is "worth" $2.7 billion; ac-

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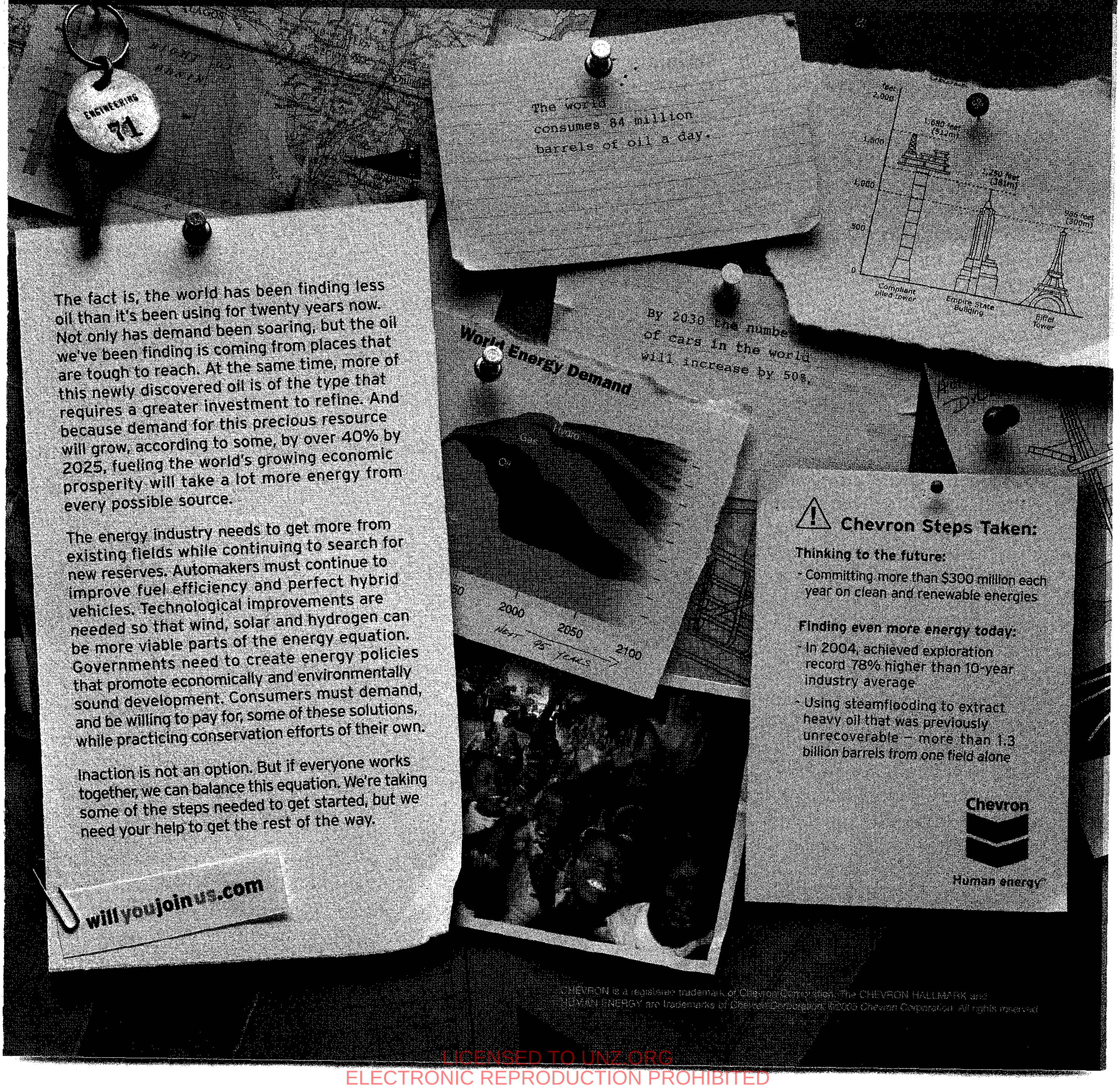

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The energy industry needs to get more from existing fields while continuing to search for new reserves. Automakers must continue to improve fuel efficiency and perfect hybrid vehicles. Technological improvements are needed so that wind, solar and hydrogen can be more viable parts of the energy equation. Governments need to create energy policies that promote economically and environmentally sound development. Consumers must demand, and be willing to pay for, some of these solutions, while practicing conservation efforts of their own.

Inaction is not an option. But if everyone works together, we can balance this equation. We're taking some of the steps needed to get started, but we need your help to get the rest of the way.

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cording to Trump, "read *Forbes* and double it." O'Brien reports that the true figure is in the range of $150 million to $250 million. Leaving aside for the moment that the *Forbes* 400 list, the annual soft-core glimpse of the American über-plutocracy, tends to be about as reliable as, say, rumors of weapons of mass destruction hidden in the shrubbery at Mar-a-Lago, I hope O'Brien and his publisher will pause before writing Trump a ten-figure check. They should let this drag out a while. Getting on Trump's nerves can be a rewarding pastime.

Nine years ago, I wrote a Profile of Trump for this magazine. Along the way, we had many one-on-one encounters, during which I occasionally found him likable, even intentionally amusing. Without attempting to determine his net worth—I'm hardly that deft a reporter—I knew that it was a fraction of whatever he claimed. In part, my source was *Forbes*. In 1996—a few years after a de-facto bankruptcy in which Trump's creditors were forced to write off $700 million of personally guaranteed loans to him—he somehow re-insinuated himself onto the *Forbes* list at 373, with $450 million. The actual figure, he assured me, was $2.25 billion. I marvel anew when I recall what he said as he handed me a copy of his unaudited financial statement: "I've never shown this to a reporter before." Almost invariably, when "TRUMP" appears on a building the real financial risks—and the controlling equity—belong to others. "TrumpNation" persuasively demonstrates this fun-with-mirrors methodology. And that's why Trump is angry.

He's also still angry with me, I'm pretty sure. In "The Art of the Comeback," one of his ghostwritten endeavors, published a few months after the Profile appeared, he devoted a couple of pages to attacking me: "When [Singer] came into the office I immediately sensed that he was not much of anything, nondescript, with a faint wiseguy sneer and some kind of chip on his shoulder." Et cetera, ad hominem.

After which he seemed content to occupy himself otherwise, until last summer, when the *Times* reviewed a book I wrote, "Character Studies," which included my portrait of Trump. "That Trump is already a caricature of a caricature makes him too easy a target, with neither the foot speed nor the wit to defend himself," the reviewer, Jeff MacGregor, wrote. Three weeks later, the *Times Book Review* published a delightfully deranged letter from Trump in which he set forth his credentials—"I've read John Updike, I've read Orhan Pamuk, I've read Philip Roth. . . . I've been a best-selling author for close to 20 years. Whether you like it or not, facts are facts"—and dispensed with both MacGregor and me. We were "losers" who "just don't have what it takes." Facts.

Immediately, "Character Studies" levitated many thousand notches on the Amazon list. How could I thank Trump? Money, I thought, he likes money. I wrote him a check for a thousand dollars, then sensed that that was excessive. I tore it up and wrote another check, which I sent, along with a letter:

"Dear Donald: Thank you so much for that wonderful letter to the New York *Times*. . . . Though I'm sure that you, as an author, are aware that it's considered bad form to pay the people who review one's books, I nevertheless enclose a check for $37.82, a small token of my enormous gratitude. You're special to me. Also, I enclose a couple of Band-Aids. Because you seem unable to stop picking at this particular scab, these should come in handy. Cheerfully," etc.

Two weeks later, an envelope arrived, cream-colored with a gold-embossed "TRUMP" logo and, inside, my letter, returned, with a neatly written message from Trump in thick black uppercase letters: "MARK—YOU ARE A TOTAL LOSER—AND YOUR BOOK (AND WRITINGS) SUCKS! BEST WISHES DONALD P.S. AND I HEAR IT IS SELLING BADLY." I treasure this memento. Indeed, it is now framed, along with a photocopy of the cashed check for $37.82; evidently he needed the money.

But has he called or written since then? Alas, no. I miss my pen pal. Given a chance, I'd congratulate Trump for being right about the sales of my book. Last time I checked, it had slipped to 447,730 on the Amazon list.

So, please, Donald, come back. Once and for all, sue me. I need the aggravation. Not to mention the royalties.

—*Mark Singer*

THE BOARDS
PAJAMA CONNECTION

The actors Harry Connick, Jr., and Michael McKean and the director and choreographer Kathleen Marshall were hanging out the other night in the lobby of the American Airlines Theatre, just before dressing for a preview of the Roundabout's new production of "The Pajama Game," the 1954 musical about workers in a pajama factory who go on strike. Harold Wolpert, the company's managing director, blew in, saw the line at the box office, and rubbed his palms together.

"Our subscribers are very excited," he said. "It turns out everybody you talk to has a 'Pajama Game' connection. They know George Abbott directed the original, with Bob Fosse choreography. Then they saw it in schools. In the past ten years alone, it's been produced in more than eleven hundred schools and in four hundred and fifty community-theatre productions. But I never saw it anywhere until now. Strange."

McKean, who is playing Hines, the factory clock-watcher, regarded him with sympathy. "I did the show in school, Long Island's North Shore High, in 1964," he said.

"Well, a guy in my office, who comes from Pepper Pike, Ohio, saw it when he was in eighth grade, at a local high school," Wolpert said. "It made him determine, then and there, that he was going to come to New York to be in the theatre." He waved and went backstage.

"Mr. Mooney, our North Shore English teacher, was both the director and the choreographer," McKean said. "I auditioned for the part of Hines then. But Mr. Mooney wouldn't give it to me."

Marshall said, "Our leading lady, Kelli O'Hara, auditioned in 1996 for 'The Pajama Game' put on by her university, in Oklahoma City, but she didn't get anything."

McKean went on, "Mr. Mooney

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said I had to do the number 'Steam Heat,' with John Best and Francine Schutzman."

"You remember their names?" Connick said.

"Of course," McKean said. "Francine Schutzman was the only one who could dance. All I could do was snap my fingers." He said to Marshall, "I'm worried you'll find out that I still can't dance."

"I'd rather have somebody who moves like a real person," she said.

"That's Kathleen's way of saying we can't dance," McKean said with a grin.

"I approach this show by thinking who-are-these-people-and-what-do-they-want?" Marshall said.

"It's a classic vintage show," said Connick, who plays Sid Sorokin, the factory foreman. "I take it seriously. As if their problems were real."

"Way before I was born, my mother went to see the original show when it was in tryouts in Boston," Marshall said. "She was in Girls' Latin School at the time. She believed 'The Pajama Game.' Then we had the cast album at home. I always thought all songs came from cast albums. But I never saw the show or the movie until I was offered this job."

"I knew the songs from the radio, but I never sang them and never played them before," Connick said. "When I got this job, I went out and bought the DVD of the movie, with John Raitt as Sid. That guy was strong!"

"Raitt had a great voice, but I never believed him as a blue-collar guy, any more than I'd believe Ethel Merman as a waitress," McKean said.

"We've got more color in this production, and realistic sewing machines," Marshall said.

"There's scenery with huge buttons all over it, but it's believable," Connick added. "As believable as a guy talking and suddenly he starts to sing. That's art."

"We gave Harry a new bit in 'Hernando's Hideaway,' where he plays the piano," Marshall said. "He's playing his own Harry Connick way, but we believe him as Sid Sorokin."

"Sometimes I sing too dramatically, but you pull me back to where I should be," Connick told her.

"Mr. Mooney is now living in North Carolina," McKean said. "I'm going to call him and tell him I finally got the part of Hines."

—*Lillian Ross*

Harry Connick, Jr., and Michael McKean

POSTSCRIPT

Wendy Wasserstein, who died last week at only fifty-five, was one of the few Pulitzer Prize winners to be recognizable by her first name. If you said "Wendy," theatregoers, and everyone else in the theatre community, knew instantly whom you meant. Wendy was beloved to an almost alarming degree. Her fans were passionate not just about her work but about her; strangers would constantly leap out, hug her, and offer heartfelt advice about her love life, her family, and her weight.

I first met Wendy when I was an undergraduate props person on a Yale production of the Feydeau farce "Hotel Paradiso." Wendy, who was enrolled in the graduate school's playwriting program, was moonlighting as an actress, and playing a haughty French maid. I quickly discovered two things: that Wendy was irresistible, onstage and off, and that she could manage to lose all of her props at every performance. Later, I appeared in a workshop of one of her earliest plays, "Any Woman Can't," playing a huffy choreographer named Bob le Bob; like everyone else, I would do anything for Wendy, even tap-dance in public in black tights. Wendy also wrote a piece, with Christopher Durang, called "When Dinah Shore Ruled the Earth," which featured a musical production number entitled "Welfare Mothers on Parade."

Wendy was helplessly approachable; her giggle and her cloud of unmanageable hair became iconic, as if she were a sort of hyper-educated, lyrically gifted Raggedy Ann. My mother and my aunts cared far more about Wendy's activities than they did about mine: Was Wendy seeing anyone? When was she speaking at the 92nd Street Y? How was her daughter, Lucy Jane, and, most especially, what was Wendy wearing to the Tonys? Wendy was always patient with this onslaught of adoration. She travelled constantly, she created a program to introduce city students to the theatre, and she never seemed to mind when yet another human being grabbed her, sobbing, to relate how Wendy had written her life story.

The last time I saw Wendy was a few months ago, at a preview of her play "Third." The piece centers on an embattled relationship between a feminist professor and a Waspy male student. As always, Wendy refused to toe any party line; the student became heroic, and the play managed to explore precisely how the Democrats lost the country. Wendy had been suffering from lymphoma, but, seated at the back of the house, she was smiling. As each member of the audience busily informed the person in the next seat, that was Wendy, and this was her new play, and who would want to be anywhere else?

—*Paul Rudnick*

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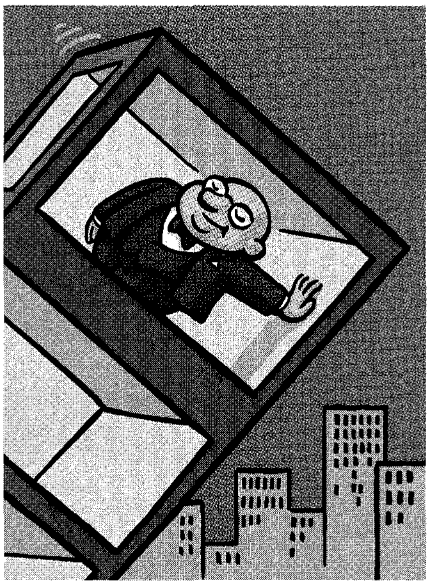
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
OVERCOMPENSATING

Markets thrive on information. The more investors know about a company, the more likely they are to figure out what that company is really worth. So when the Securities and Exchange Commission recently proposed a new set of rules requiring companies to disclose more information about exactly how much (and in exactly what ways) they pay their top executives, it seemed like a market-friendly no-brainer. Corporations are already required to issue statements detailing C.E.O. pay packages, but they often bury important data in footnotes or beneath mounds of obfuscatory language, so that even sophisticated investors find it hard to get a clear picture of how much C.E.O.s earn. The S.E.C.'s proposed rules will require companies to disclose more about executives' perks and stock-option grants and about their future pension benefits. Companies will also have to provide a single figure summarizing all the money an executive is scheduled to get. They can still pay their bosses as lavishly as they like. They'll just have to tell investors what they're doing.

The new rules seem sensible and inoffensive, but they've already come under fire. Some critics complained that the S.E.C. had no business meddling with internal corporate decisions, and that the cost of the regulations far outweighs any possible benefit. But the critics' real beef is that they think the rules are driven by politics, not economics. As Fred Smith, Jr., the head of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, put it, "This is playing to the simple egalitarian concern that a world where everybody gets paid the same amount would be a better world." Only crypto-Marxists and softhearted liberals, in other words, worry about how much C.E.O.s make. There's certainly plenty of populist concern about C.E.O. pay, perhaps because the average big-company C.E.O. now makes more than three hundred times what the average worker makes. But the S.E.C.'s commissioners (three of whom are conservative Republicans) came up with the new rules not because workers care about how much C.E.O.s make but because shareholders do. Big institutional investors and major value investors like Warren Buffett now pay far more attention to executive compensation than they once did. And when they speak the S.E.C. tends to listen.

In part, executive compensation matters to investors because executives now take so much money out of corporations every year. According to the economists Lucian Bebchuk and Yaniv Grinstein, between 1993 and 2003 the top five executives at fifteen hundred companies in the U.S. were paid three hundred and fifty billion dollars. That level of pay makes sense only if it leads to better performance. But plenty of executives are getting superstar pay for journeyman work. For one thing, executives are rewarded far more for good luck in their industry (like rising oil prices that they had no control over) than they are punished for bad luck, according to a study by the professors Gerald Garvey and Todd Milbourn. Though most of their pay is now in the form of stock or stock options, C.E.O.s' cash salaries have also risen sharply over the past decade; in 2005, the average C.E.O. got paid millions literally just for showing up. And lavish perks—ranging from personal use of the corporate jet to having the company cover the C.E.O.'s income taxes—remain ubiquitous.



More important, it's becoming increasingly clear that, from a shareholder's perspective, overpaid C.E.O.s aren't just expensive; they're downright destructive. One recent study of the market between 1992 and 2001 by economists at Rutgers and Penn State found that the more a C.E.O. was paid, relative to his peers, the more likely his company was to underperform in the stock market. The economist David Yermack, of N.Y.U., has found that companies that allow their C.E.O.s to use corporate jets for personal reasons fall short of market benchmarks by four per cent annually. There are myriad ways in which excessive or poorly designed pay packages can do damage. "Golden parachutes," which guarantee executives huge payoffs if their companies are acquired, may encourage them to sell out even when the company would be better off remaining independent. Conversely, according to a study by the finance professors Jarrad Harford and Kai Li, very highly paid executives are more likely than their peers to make acquisitions, and to receive major financial rewards for doing so, even when the acquisition ends up destroying corporate value. And there is evidence that overpaid C.E.O.s are more likely to commit fraud that props up stock prices—perhaps because the more you have to gain from criminal activity, the more likely you are to engage in it.

This doesn't mean that all lucrative pay packages are a waste of money. But, more and more, big investors are treating excess compensation as a reliable index that something serious may be wrong. In particular, it's often a sign that a company's board of directors is catering to the C.E.O.'s whims rather than supervising him. While the S.E.C.'s new rules won't solve the problem of weak boards or overweening C.E.O.s, they will make it easier for investors to figure out exactly who is being paid what, and to make an informed decision about whether to buy or sell a stock. We shouldn't expect to see a dent in executive compensation anytime soon. But in the long run companies that don't balance pay with performance tend to suffer where it matters most—in the stock market.

—*James Surowiecki*

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE BELIEVER

George W. Bush's loyal speechwriter.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

Michael Gerson's colleagues marvel at his ability to predict the President's thoughts.

RICHARD THOMPSON

The Judson Welliver Society is a bipartisan, sporadically serious, and generally impious club of ex-White House speechwriters. Its founder and president-for-life is the former *Times* columnist William Safire, who once wrote speeches for Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon. Welliver, a former newspaperman, was the first "literary clerk" ever to be placed on the White House payroll; he wrote speeches for the subcompetent Warren G. Harding and the ineloquent Calvin Coolidge. The members of the society that carries his nearly forgotten name get together every year or so to remind one another of the maddening yet elating experience of watching the most powerful men on earth rewrite their otherwise perfect sentences.

The December, 2002, meeting of the Welliver Society took place at the headquarters of the Motion Picture Association of America, two blocks from the White House. Jack Valenti, the former Lyndon Johnson aide, who was then the M.P.A.A. chairman, provided his dining room for free, which is crucial to any gathering of writers, especially those with money. In attendance that night were writers who had served every President since Harry S. Truman, including Theodore Sorensen, who wrote for John F. Kennedy, and much of the recently decommissioned Clinton speechwriting team. White House speechwriters on active service are not offered membership in the Society, but they are invited to the dinner, mostly to be put on the spot. So there was a good deal of anticipation when it came time for Michael Gerson, then President Bush's chief speechwriter, to address the group. By 2002, it had become the cross-party consensus that Gerson was almost Sorensen's equal in skill and rhetorical ambition. ("George W. Bush's first week as President of the United States began with a speech that, taken as a whole and judged purely as a piece of writing, was shockingly good," Hendrik Hertzberg, a former speechwriter for Jimmy Carter and not a Bush enthusiast, wrote in this magazine in January of 2001.) Gerson has provided Bush with striking expressions, such as "the soft bigotry of low expectations," to describe how prejudicial perceptions affect minority students, and his invocation of the American dream, in June, 1999, when then Governor Bush announced his candidacy:

> The success of America has never been proven by cities of gold, but by citizens of character. Men and women who work hard, dream big, love their family, serve their neighbor. Values that turn a piece of earth into a neighborhood, a community, a chosen nation.

Unlike most speechwriters, who tend to be segregated from policymaking, Gerson has always been an influential figure in the White House, in part because he shares Bush's belief in the power of faith—both men are evangelical Christians—and because he possesses a preternatural ability, his friends say, to anticipate Bush's thinking. There is a "mind meld" between the two men, Bush's counsellor Dan Bartlett told me, adding, "When you bring a West Texas approach to the heavy debates of the world, there has to be a translator, and Mike is the translator."

Gerson is known to his friends for his pre-ironic sensibility, and for his soft heart; I once saw him close to tears when he spoke about AIDS patients in Uganda. But he is also a capable operator. In 2002, a senior White House official told me, Gerson outflanked Dick Cheney, who didn't want Bush to declare unambiguously his support for a Palestinian state, as Gerson had urged him to do—and as Bush did, in a speech that Gerson wrote. Gerson is also unashamedly guileless in his search for heroes; when he came to Washington, in the late nineteen-eighties, he would sometimes park outside the home of George F. Will, hoping to catch a glimpse of the conservative columnist. And, even in the Bush White House, he is known for his piety. On display in his office is a book called "Standing in the Need of Prayer," photographs of African-Americans praying. He told the *National Journal's* Carl Cannon, last year, that the book "moved me no end." Cannon then noted, as if in wonderment, "Gerson really speaks this way."

At a Welliver dinner, the remarks of ex-speechwriters tend toward carefully calibrated irreverence; current speechwriters aren't expected to gripe or to disclose confidences. But at the 2002 event, Gerson spoke with immoderate earnestness. According to several people who attended, Safire asked Gerson to tell the group something it didn't know about Bush. Gerson, in a quavering voice, responded with a story that left some of his audience nonplussed. He described a call that he got moments after Bush finished addressing a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001. Bush thanked Gerson for his work on the speech, to which Gerson replied, "Mr. President, this is why God wants you here." Gerson then related Bush's response, as evidence of his thoughtfulness. "The President said, 'No, this is why God wants *us* here.' "

An uncomfortable silence filled the room, and then one of Bill Clinton's speechwriters said, in a stage whisper, "God must really hate Al Gore."

Gerson knows that he is an enigma to the liberal establishment of Washington. He is a churchgoing, anti-gay-marriage, pro-life supply-sider who believes absolutely in the corporeality of Jesus' resurrection. He is also supremely loyal to an ideological President in a city that tends to grant only posthumous approbation to ideologues, particularly conservative ones. Yet among his role models he counts Martin Luther King, Jr., and the radical evangelical abolitionists of the nineteenth century, and his chief vocational preoccupation is the battle against infectious disease in Africa. He has won the admiration of many AIDS and debt-relief activists, including the U2 singer Bono, who, in an e-mail, said, "Mike is known as a 'moral compass' at the White House. Seems like that compass keeps pointing him in the direction of Africa," where Gerson has "obviously left a part of himself." He is popular with reporters, perhaps because he was once one himself, at *U.S. News & World Report*. He has a self-deprecating manner that the Washington press corps is surprised to find in the Bush White House. "Mike has his own consistencies that defy the normal consistencies in our politics," E. J. Dionne, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a columnist for the Washington *Post*, said. "For Mike, it's thoroughly consistent to be pro-life and to work for poor people in Africa."

Gerson also baffles many Republicans. Unlike the libertarian wing of the Party, he says that the government has a moral duty to help the poor. When Bush, in his first Presidential campaign, criticized small-government Republicanism as "an approach with no higher goal, no nobler purpose than 'Leave us alone,' " the head of the Cato Institute suggested that Bush's speechwriter was moonlighting for Hillary Clinton.

Gerson defends Bush's tax cuts, which the President's critics believe not only favor those with the highest incomes but have also left less money for important domestic programs; Gerson believes that free markets and free trade are the best means of lifting people out of poverty, and that lower taxes stimulate both. "The part of Mike I have the most trouble understanding, perhaps because we simply disagree, is how he can square his support for pretty substantial spending for the very poorest among us with a defense of Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest people," Dionne said. "Maybe Mike just buys supply-side economics in a way that I don't, but most supply-siders don't think like Mike."

Jim Towey, who directs the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which steers government funds to religious groups that provide social services, explained Gerson's role in the Bush Administration this way: "There are some people in the White House who are more conservative than compassionate, and some who are more compassionate than conservative. Mike is more compassionate than conservative."

Gerson's role as protector of "compassionate conservatism" was evident during a meeting in the first term with Bush and his advisers, who were discussing a proposal to spend fifteen billion dollars to combat AIDS in Africa. According to Dan Bartlett, Bush went around the room and then asked, "What do you think, Gerson?" ("The President just calls him Gerson," Joshua Bolten, the White House budget chief, told me.

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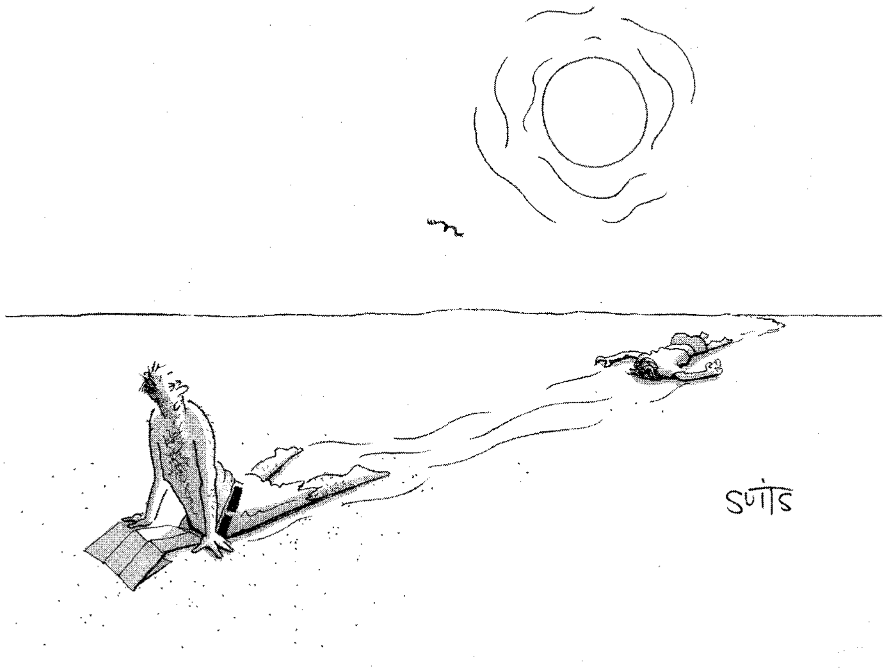
“Mike isn’t the sort of guy who lends himself to silly nicknames.”) Bartlett said that Gerson answered with typical bluntness: “The bottom line is that we’re the richest nation in history, and history will judge us severely if we don’t do this.” The room went quiet. Then Bush said, “That’s Gerson being Gerson.” Although the program’s implementation has been sclerotic and not without controversy (critics have faulted it for emphasizing abstinence over condom use), the Administration now spends far more each year to combat AIDS in Africa than the Clinton Administration did. Bolten, a friend of Gerson’s, recalled another meeting, in December, 2004, about domestic-spending cuts. There was a skirmish that day between Bolten and Gerson, but neither can remember the details, mainly because Gerson suffered a mild heart attack early the next morning. He was rushed into surgery, and had two coronary stents implanted in his chest. A few hours later, Gerson sent Bolten an e-mail from the intensive-care unit: “I told you that budget was too extreme and shocking. I couldn’t take it.”

Even before the heart attack, Gerson, who is forty-one, was not a picture of stout good health. He is slight of stature and his skin has a tendency to shade gray, as one might expect of someone who spends his life sequestered in the White House, or in a nearby Starbucks, where he frequently writes speeches. Many of Gerson’s friends thought that he would quit after the coronary, but Bush asked Gerson to become a senior policy adviser, and he moved to a first-floor West Wing office, two doors down from the Oval Office. While he would still play a role in Bush’s speeches, Gerson was told to focus on Africa policy, on democracy in the Middle East, and on domestic social programs, including faith-based initiatives—in short, to be the advocate for such goals.

Before he took on this new role, though, Gerson—with his first-term writing partners, Matthew Scully and John McConnell—wrote the speech that is perhaps the best summation of Bush’s ideology, the second Inaugural, in which Bush said, “All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.” Like many Gerson speeches, the second Inaugural was steeped in the language of faith—and contained utopian promises that will be difficult to fulfill. In that way, it highlighted, perhaps inadvertently, the distance between rhetoric and accomplishment in the Bush Presidency.

Gerson is aware that Bush’s reputation hinges on the outcome of the Iraq war, and one day in his office we spoke about the Administration’s audacious goal of democratizing the Middle East. When I suggested that Bush might live to a great old age and never see the disappearance of totalitarianism in the region, he demurred, saying, “I think in three years this will be seen differently.”



“Hey, hon! You were right—it was a left at the QuickMart.”

Gerson’s office is windowless, and evidence of his writerly quirks could be seen on his desk, which was littered with violently chewed pen caps and legal pads that were dark with illegible scribbling. Gerson’s fidgeting is a source of amusement to his friends; they speak of occasions when he gnawed through pens, leaving his mouth filled with blue ink. At one point in our conversation, he rubbed his eyes so ferociously that I feared he would detach a retina. “I’m a worrier,” he said. “I put a lot of pressure on myself. I know people think it’s funny, but these aren’t charming eccentricities. When I had my heart attack, my doctor was very clear that I had to find a different way to work, without putting so much pressure on myself.”

The West Wing is no place for tranquil thought, especially as Bush tries to revive his Presidency. Gerson conceded that the current moment is a complicated and testing one for the White House, but he pointed out that Bush had predicted it in his speech of September 20, 2001. “You have a section where the President says, in essence, ‘Over time, life’s going to go back to normal for all of you, but it’s not going back to normal for me,’ ” Gerson said, quoting Bush quoting himself. “Now, that was written assuming that we didn’t have twenty more attacks, and for the first few months afterward we were expecting daily attacks. We had even worked on a set of remarks for a follow-up attack.” Gerson argued that the “successful protection of the American people reduces the sense of urgency on these questions of terrorism.”

When I asked Gerson about the recent domestic-spying controversy, he replied, almost irritably, “These are the appropriate constitutional and necessary methods to defend American liberty.” He added, “The President views us as at war, and he’d much rather be on that side of things than have to apologize after an attack. I don’t want to write any more ‘days of national mourning’ speeches.”

Gerson, like others in the Bush

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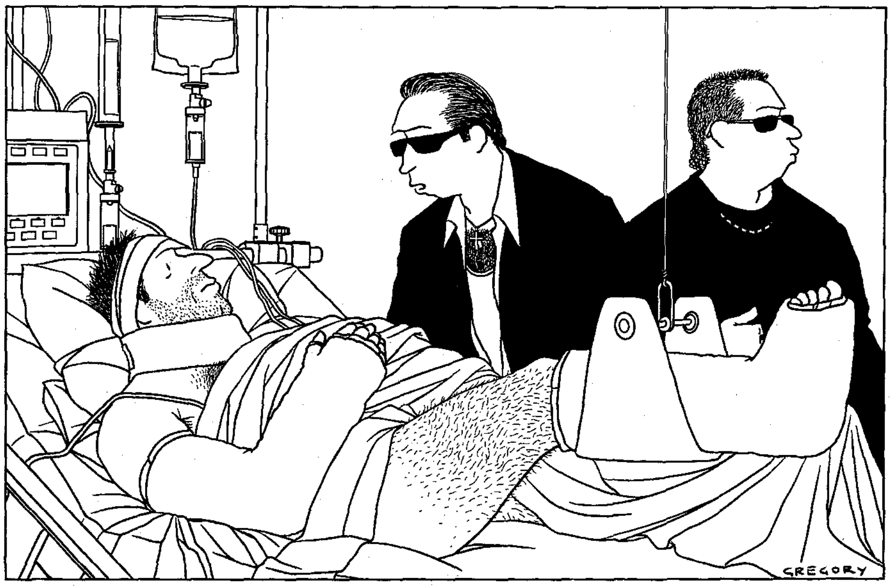


"Don't worry, boss—we whacked your skis."

• •

White House, seems to regard the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as somewhat beside the point, but he noted that Bush has now admitted the obvious—that the war has not gone as predicted. "I know that some of my decisions have led to terrible loss—and not one of those decisions has been taken lightly," Bush said in an Oval Office speech in December that was written by Gerson. "I know this war is controversial, yet being your President requires doing what I believe is right and accepting the consequences." Bush did not signal ambivalence, or a change of tactics, but the confessional tone, Gerson said, helped people to hear his argument for war in a new way. "We gained the ability to do the pushback by being realistic on the ground."

In December, the Washington *Post* reported that some senior White House staff members, including Bush's political adviser, Karl Rove, opposed this provisionally candid approach, but Gerson said Bush felt that he couldn't respond because of the "unbelievable partisanship" of the Democrats, and because of the press of events—most notably, Hurricane Katrina, which last August destroyed much of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Gerson told me, in an uncharacteristic burst of spin, "It's amazing how much Katrina dominated the White House staff in terms of time, effort, and energy and emotion."

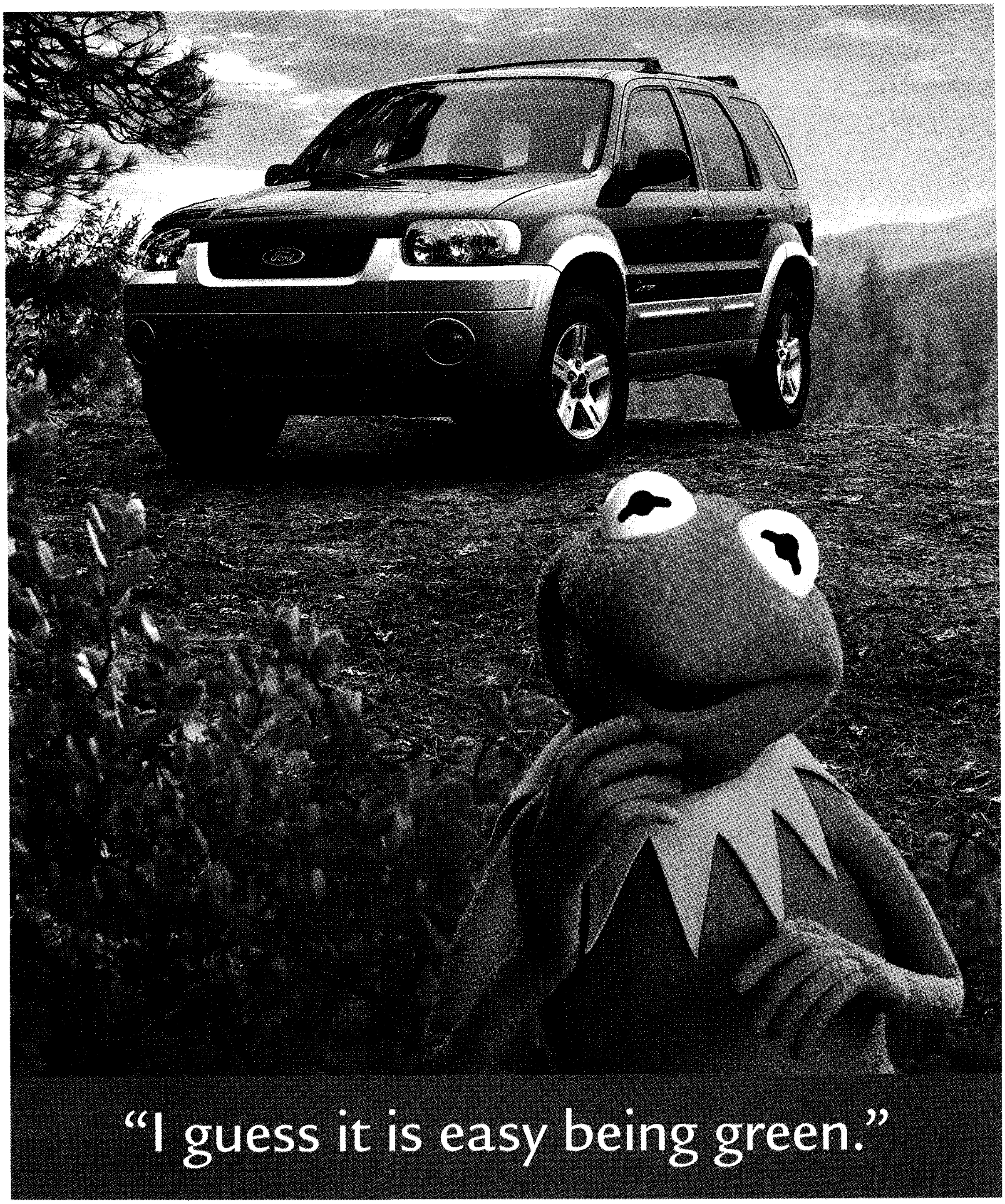
In fact, few believed that Bush demonstrated much leadership throughout the Hurricane Katrina crisis; when the storm made landfall he was on vacation, in Crawford, Texas, and seemingly detached from daily events. His encouraging words to Michael Brown, the former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("Brownie, you're doin' a heckuva job!"), have become a comedic cliché. Bush did not, however, fail oratorically. In a speech from New Orleans two weeks after the hurricane struck, he said, "The people of this land have come back from fire, flood, and storm to build anew—and to build better than what we had before. Americans have never left our destiny to the whims of nature—and we will not start now."

The words, which were Gerson's, were seen as hollow against the chaotic backdrop of the federal government's response. Gerson, though, argues for the importance of choosing the right language in a crisis: "In times of national grief, the words really do matter. And, in times of focussing national purpose, the words really do matter." So it was with the second Inaugural. "I think the President believes that one role of his is to be practical, realistic, and effective, but he also believes that he has a second, and maybe more important, role, to set out an ideal," Gerson said. "The President's view is that one of the great soft-power advantages of the United States of America is that we can imagine a different and better world, that we are unique because we are not defined by race or tradition but by a set of universal ideals." Bush's critics, Gerson continued, lack historical perspective. "This is not some Don Quixote thing for the President. This is an odd time to be skeptical about the advance of freedom, given the advances we've made over the past fifty years. There are three billion people now who live in democratic countries." Gerson went on to quote Martin Luther King: " 'The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.' I believe that deeply."

Gerson frames issues in stark moral terms. The three most famous words he has ever set to paper are "axis of evil," a phrase referring to Iraq, Iran, and North Korea that made its first appearance in the 2002 State of the Union Message. A speechwriter then on Gerson's team, David Frum, had proposed "axis of hatred," but, according to Frum, Gerson substituted "evil" for its more theological resonance. "Evil exists, and it has to be confronted," Gerson told me.

Twenty years ago, Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire." Soviet political prisoners later said that the words gave them hope, but the foreign-policy realists associated with the Presidency of Bush's father believed, and still do, that the expression was inflammatory and unwise. As a speechwriter, Gerson said, his conscience is, literally, his guide. "When we're dealing with these questions, it always occurs to me, How would people who are living in that evil experience it?" he said. "How would exiles, and prisoners, and the families of the dead describe it? Now, that's an element of realism. Are you going to take their side or not? When you talk about women being beheaded in soccer stadiums, or women being stoned for adultery, how would they experience it? I think asking this question is a form of realism." He continued, "I think one of the ways Presidents and governments and civilizations are viewed is whether they side with this moral reality or not."

Yet Bush and his Administration have sometimes stood with the auto-



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crats—as in China, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The experiment in Iraq is not without hope, but it is a testament to the limitations of nation-building—and to the limitations of the Bush Administration's designated nation-builders. All speechwriters create an ideal character of the Presidents they serve, but the actual Bush has now and then been eclipsed by Gerson's idea of Bush, and not only in foreign policy. What is perhaps Gerson's most extraordinary speech for Bush was a consideration of the legacy of slavery in America. Bush delivered it in 2003, at a former slave-trading station in Senegal:

> The spirit of Africans in America did not break. Yet the spirit of their captors was corrupted. Small men took on the powers and airs of tyrants and masters. Years of unpunished brutality and bullying and rape produced a dullness and hardness of conscience. Christian men and women became blind to the clearest commands of their faith and added hypocrisy to injustice. A republic founded on equality for all became a prison for millions. And yet, in the words of the African proverb, "no fist is big enough to hide the sky." All the generations of oppression under the laws of man could not crush the hope of freedom and defeat the purposes of God.

These words had no discernible effect on Bush's relations with African-Americans, which could hardly have been worse, and the speech was never given much attention. Gerson acknowledged that the federal response to Hurricane Katrina has not helped the relationship between Bush and black America. He said that he had hoped the storm "would open a larger debate on poverty and race in America. But the Republican leadership in Congress has not shown an interest in that. This has exposed something we eventually have to confront." Gerson said that African-Americans might like Bush if they knew him better. "The President I know is a very tolerant man," he told me. "The President I know is a very compassionate man."

Gerson was introduced to George W. Bush in 1999. Their first meeting—a job interview—did not begin auspiciously. Gerson had written speeches for, among others, the Presidential candidates Steve Forbes and Bob Dole. But, according to Carl Cannon, Gerson was so nervous about seeing Bush that he was spotted hyperventilating in the hallway of a Washington Marriott, where the meeting was to take place. David Beckwith, a former Bush aide, told Cannon, "There was a Texas Ranger in Bush's security detail. He comes and says, 'There's this guy out there who says he's got an appointment with the Governor, but we're worried about him. He's sweating and breathing heavily.' "

When Gerson was brought into the room, Bush, who had read his earlier work, asked just one question: "Mike, did you write these speeches?" Gerson said yes. Bush said, "If this is your work, this is what I want." Gerson doesn't recollect the anxiety attack, but he remembers feeling that he had found in Bush an ideal President.

Underwear Man
and his disgruntled sidekick
Laundry Woman
WARP

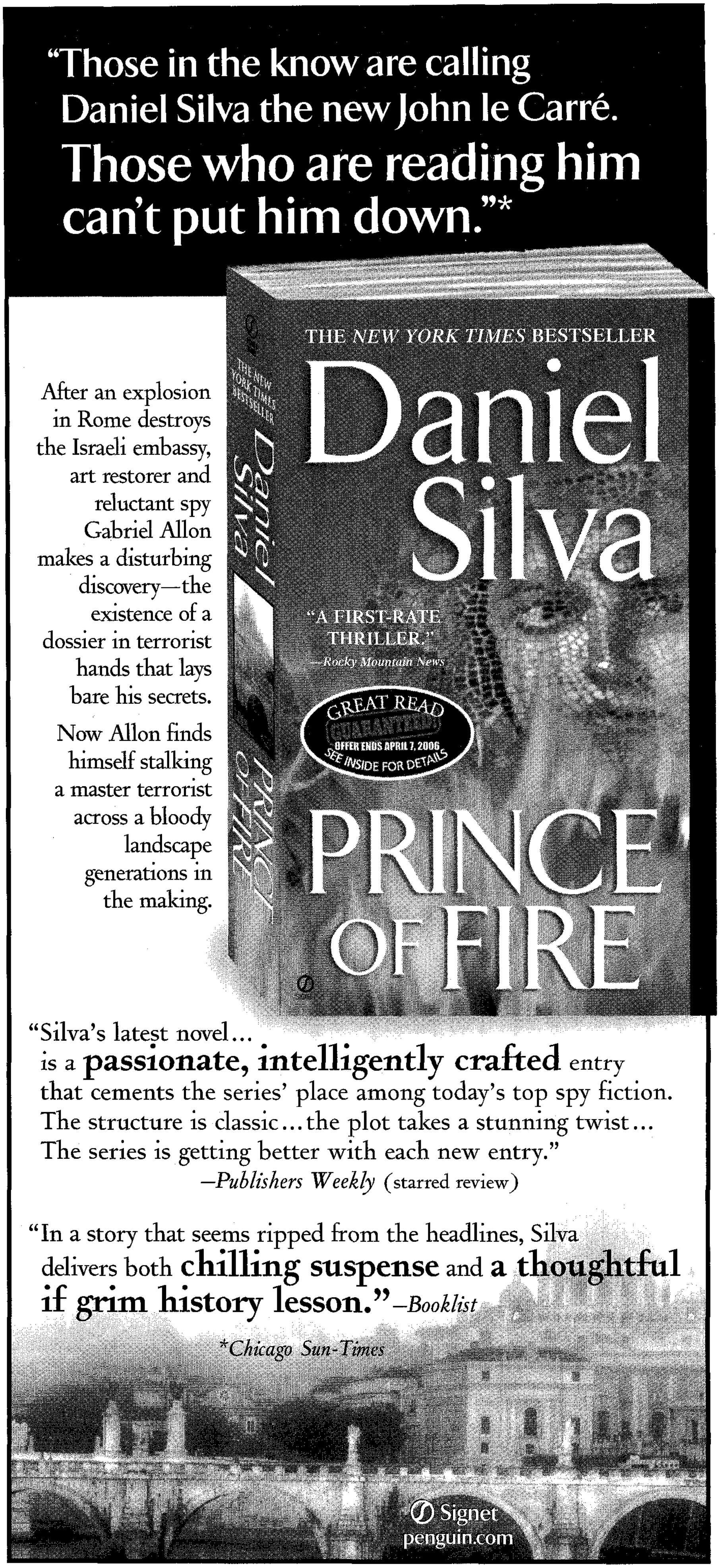
The person whom Gerson first saw as an ideal President, though, was Jimmy Carter. Gerson's father, an ice-cream maker, was a Republican, but his mother was a Kennedy Democrat, and in high school, in St. Louis (the family moved there from New Jersey when Gerson was ten), Gerson, precociously political, became a Carter supporter. To Gerson, whose parents were evangelical Christians (his last name comes from a Jewish grandfather), Carter's candid evangelicalism was thrilling. "He was very straightforward about his beliefs," Gerson said. "It was very exciting." He recalled Carter's embarrassment after telling *Playboy* that he had committed "adultery in my heart." Secular America found it amusing, but the expression, which came from the Sermon on the Mount, resonated with religious Christians.

Gerson still admires Carter, a furious critic of the Bush Administration, and many other Democrats as well. One day, I asked him to name his favorite Presidents. He immediately placed Franklin D. Roosevelt at the top of the list. "I have gained a new respect for him in my five years in the White House, for his moral clarity and firmness," Gerson said. I asked him if he appreciated F.D.R.'s frank use of Christian imagery—after all, F.D.R. often referred to the war with Germany as a battle between the Cross and the swastika. Gerson laughed. "We would never use language like that to the extent he did," he said. Also on Gerson's list were Truman, Kennedy, and, "for his vision of democracy," Woodrow Wilson. Finally, he admitted a Republican. "Reagan, to some extent," he said, "for the recognition of a moral dimension of foreign policy."

When I asked Gerson why, then, he wasn't a Democrat, he replied that the Party had left him—in particular on the issue of abortion. In 1980, he presented Carter's positions in a mock debate at his Christian high school, but, he recalled, "in the vote afterward it might have just been me for him." By 1984, he was campaigning for Reagan, who was running against Walter Mondale. "In college, I was becoming very active in the pro-life cause, and there was no room for our position,” he said. “The Democratic Party, in many ways, abandoned its great tradition of caring for the weakest members of our society. It has elevated a philosophy of choice and individual autonomy above the needs of the unborn, the handicapped, and, on the question of euthanasia, the elderly. These are the very people I thought the Democratic Party should care about.” (Carter likes Gerson’s writing, but told me that it was a “gross exaggeration” to say that the Democratic Party made itself hostile to anti-abortion activists when he was President. “Tell Gerson he’s welcome to come back to the Party, if he wants,” Carter said.)

Gerson attended Georgetown University for a year, but transferred, in 1983, to Wheaton College, an evangelical school near Chicago. In 1985, he wrote a column for the Wheaton College newspaper in praise of Mother Teresa for her commitment to “the poor and the helpless unborn” and, notably, to AIDS patients. The column was written long before AIDS became an issue of general Christian concern, and it was noticed far from campus. Charles Colson read it and invited Gerson to work for him in Washington at the prison ministry he started after his release from jail, where he served a sentence for his role in the Watergate scandal. After that, Gerson went to work as a writer and adviser to Dan Coats, the U.S. senator from Indiana, who was looking at ways to interest conservatives in issues of poverty. During the 1996 Presidential campaign, Gerson wrote speeches for Forbes and Dole, and then went to work for *U.S. News*. Steven Waldman, the founder of the religion-oriented Web site Beliefnet.com, was Gerson’s editor at *U.S. News*, where his main journalistic interest, Waldman said, was the world of charities. “Mike was very curious to find out what actually worked” to bring people out of poverty.

Gerson is close in spirit to neo-evangelicalism, which grew up in opposition to Protestant fundamentalism, and to Catholic social teaching, which urges greater engagement in the suffering of the world. “Gerson represents a wholly new thing,” Michael Cromartie, the vice-president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a right-of-center think tank in Wash-



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ington, said. Cromartie, who has studied the role of evangelicals in public life, believes that the first generation of evangelical activists became fixated on a narrow set of conflict-ridden issues, mainly abortion and gay marriage. “Many of the things that Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson say are contrary to the very core of the Christian message, which is about forgiveness, grace, and charity, not condemnation,” Cromartie said, and added, “Michael is very much focussed on the command to love your neighbor, and that means working on poverty, but, unlike Protestant liberals, he does not automatically equate this commandment with increased federal spending.”

Gerson’s life is built around prayer and faith, and so, too, are his speeches. Bush has been criticized for his regular invocations of God, but in that respect he is part of a long tradition. Bill Clinton often invoked the Deity, even referring, on occasion, to Jesus. (Bush frequently mentions “the Almighty,” and “the Creator,” but a close reading of his speeches shows them to be scrupulous in their nonsectarianism.) “The President can’t imagine that someone who is President of the United States could not have faith, because he derives so much from it,” Bush’s chief of staff, Andrew Card, said. “I can see him struggle with other world leaders who don’t appear to be grounded in some faith,” he said. He added, “The President doesn’t care what faith it is, as long as it’s faith.” (Card also called Gerson “a C. S. Lewis type,” adding, “I don’t want you to think that we’re a bunch of amoral people running around here and finally Mike Gerson comes along and sets us right.”) Gerson says that he is flummoxed by the debate over religiosity in the White House. “There’s an idea that we are constantly trying to sneak into the President’s speeches religious language, code words, that only our supporters understand,” he said. “But they are code words only if you don’t know them, and most people know them.”

To illustrate his point, Gerson reminded me about the *Times*’ coverage of Bush’s first campaign. In April of 2000, after one Bush appearance, Frank Bruni wrote, “Mr. Bush also offered an interesting variation on the saying about the pot and the kettle. ‘Don’t be takin’ a speck out of your neighbor’s eye,’ he told the audience, ‘when you got a log in your own.’ ” Bush, in his inimitable way, was actually making reference to a saying of Jesus, quoted in Matthew: “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?” Gerson, smiling, said, “No one at the *Times* seemed to know that these were the words of the Sermon on the Mount.”

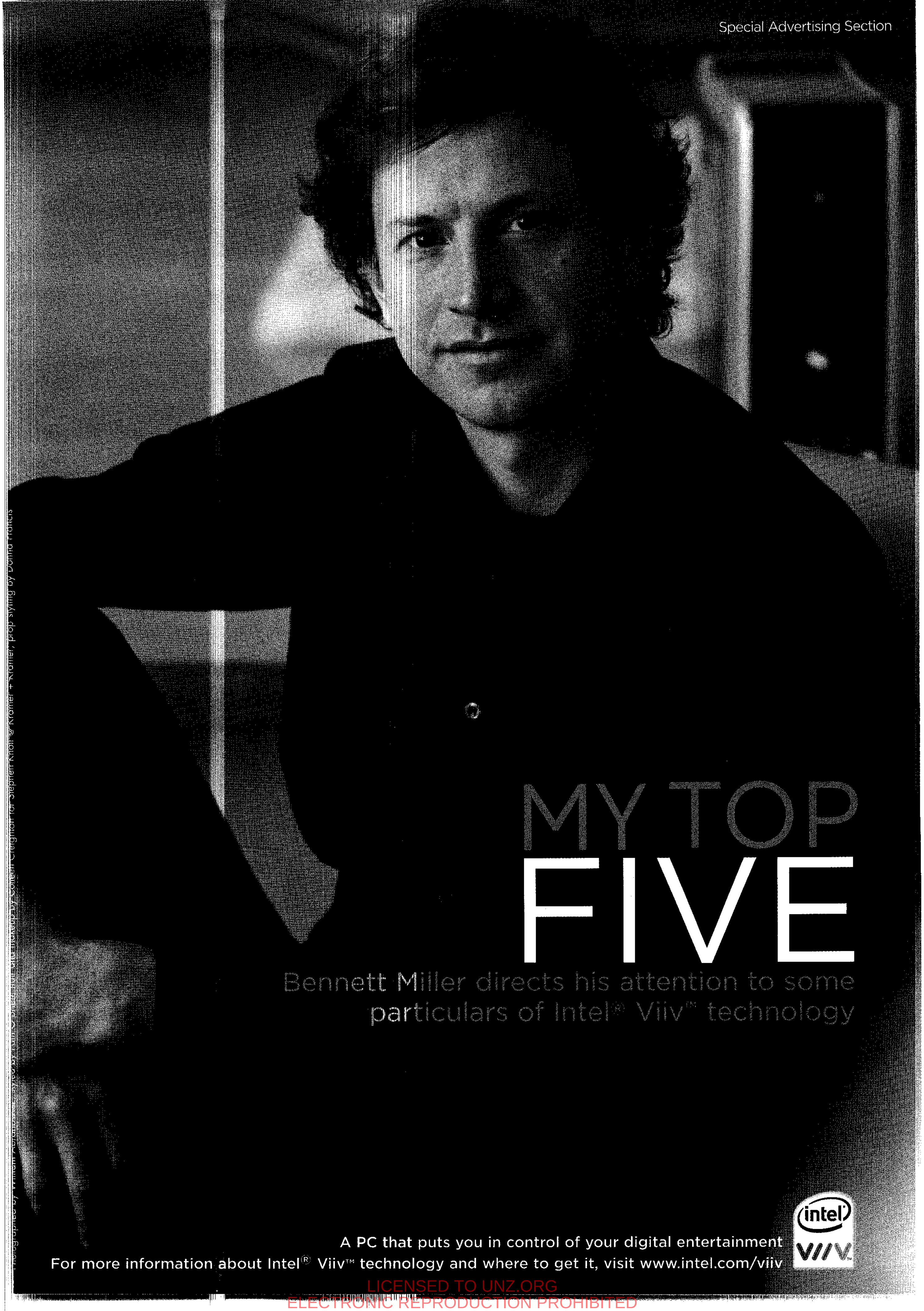
But Bush’s reliance on the language of faith has led some to wonder whether he seeks comfort or actual political guidance from Scripture. Peggy Noonan, a speechwriter for President Reagan and the first President Bush, has criticized the second Inaugural, in particular the assertion that America’s “ultimate goal” is “ending tyranny in the world,” and suggested that the perfection of an imperfect world might better be left to God. “Tyranny is a very bad thing and quite wicked, but one doesn’t expect we’re going to eradicate it any time soon,” she wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, adding, “This is not heaven, it’s earth.”

Gerson told me that Bush finds no policy prescriptions in Christianity, but he believes that God’s desires helped to shape the ideas at the core of the second Inaugural. “The President’s views about the universal appeal of liberty come in part from the fact that he is kind of marinated in the American ideal,” Gerson said. “They come in part from a view that human beings are created in the image of God and will not forever suffer the oppressor’s sword, that eventually there’s something deep in the human soul that cries out for freedom. That doesn’t mean he believes that God blesses this particular foreign policy or that particular foreign policy.”

I once asked Gerson to describe the role that the Sermon on the Mount plays in his own life, and in Bush’s life. (The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr calls the Sermon an “impossible ethical ideal” for human behavior.) “The Gospel stands in judgment of all human institutions and ideologies. It’s not identical with any one of them,” Gerson said. There is a danger, though, in “proof-texting”—searching the Bible for policy instruction. “You can’t find the justification for anti-sodomy laws in the Book of Matthew,” he said. “There is this idea that you can know what Jesus would think about missile defense or S.U.V.s, but it’s wrong. . . . I don’t have any moral qualms about saying that free-market economics are the single best way to take millions of people out of poverty that the world has ever seen,” but he added that he didn’t learn this from the Bible.

He said that the Sermon’s influence on his writing, and on Bush’s thinking, is far more profound than its influence on mere policy. Bush’s vision of democratic universalism owes much to Wilson, and Jefferson. But Gerson suggests that Bush is sure of his path because God is the God of justice. He even suggests that Bush’s leadership style—and his oratorical ambitions—are informed by the example of Jesus. “The ideal that’s set out in the Book of Matthew is a high one,” Gerson told me, “and the Sermon on the Mount has played an extraordinarily challenging role in the history of the world. And you notice that it didn’t have a realist, pragmatic understanding of what is possible. So maybe this is an attribute of leadership, to help imagine a different world.”

Imagining a different world is not the same as engineering it, and Peggy Noonan is not the only conservative to have detected a whiff of messianism in Bush’s vision. In a column last year, George Will noted that, in the Cold War, “the survival of liberty meant the containment of tyranny. Now, Bush says, the survival of liberty must involve the expansion of liberty until ‘our world’ is scrubbed clean of tyranny.” Speaking about Iraq, Gerson’s own pastor, the Reverend John Yates, told me that he “had a hard time justifying this war, but I was so torn internally that I didn’t speak out publicly.” Yates is the rector of the Falls Church, an evangelical Episcopal church in a Virginia suburb that takes its name from the church. The Falls Church has a venerable history—George Washington was once a warden there—and today it counts among its parishioners the Attorney General, Alberto Gonzales, and several Republican members of Congress. Yates praised Gerson as a devoted worshipper who is



MY TOP FIVE

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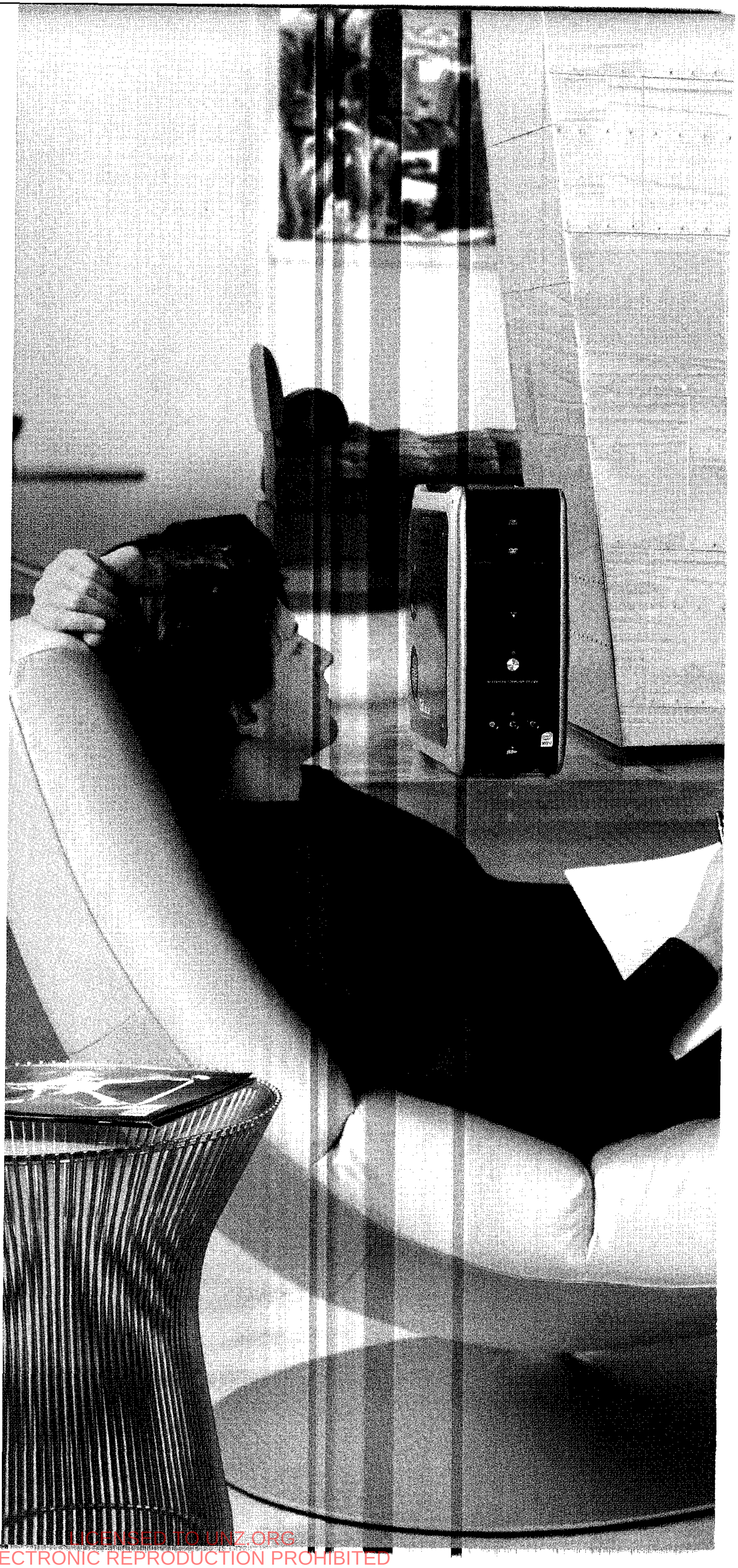

BENNETT MILLER THE BIG PICTURE

Capote director Bennett Miller has launched his directorial career with a bang.

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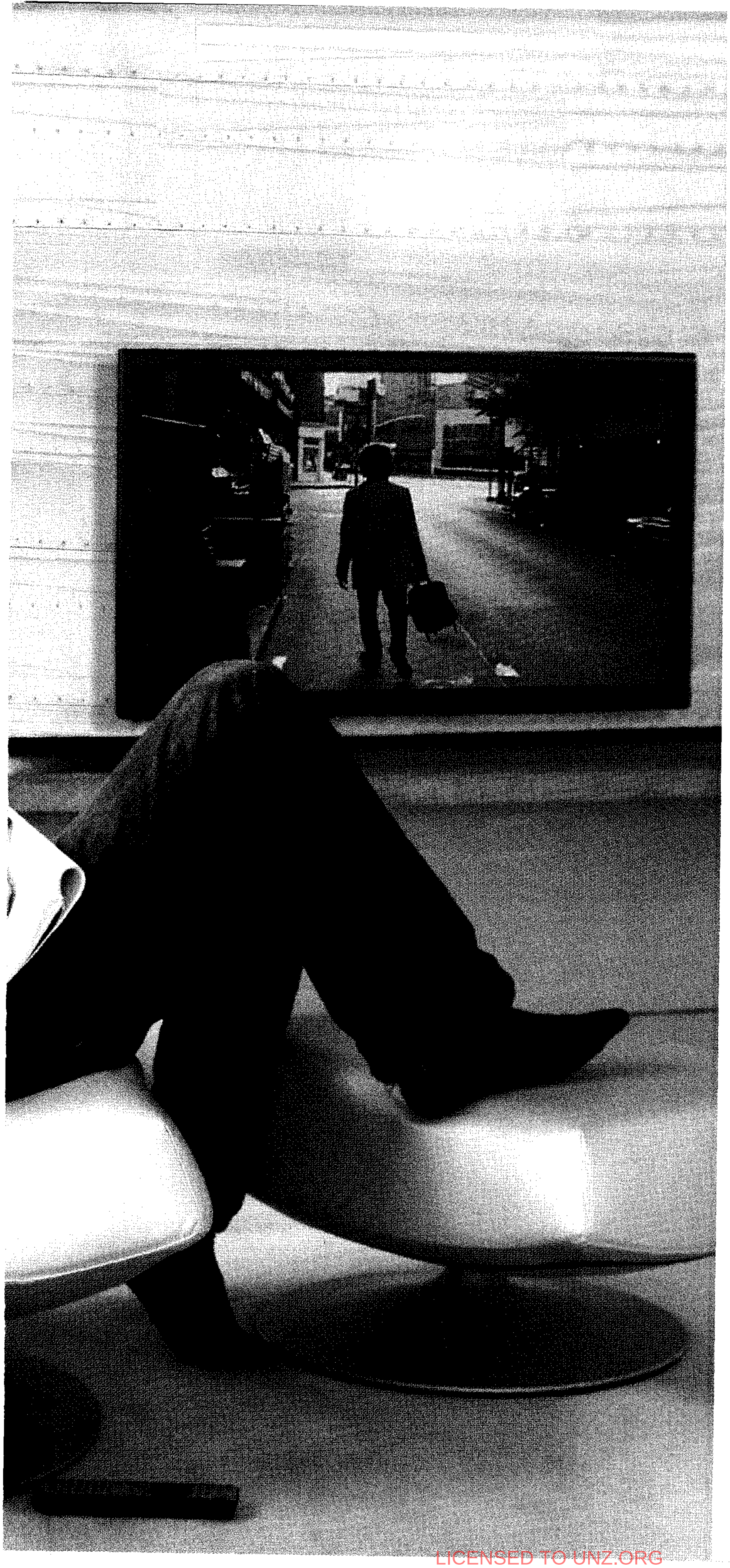

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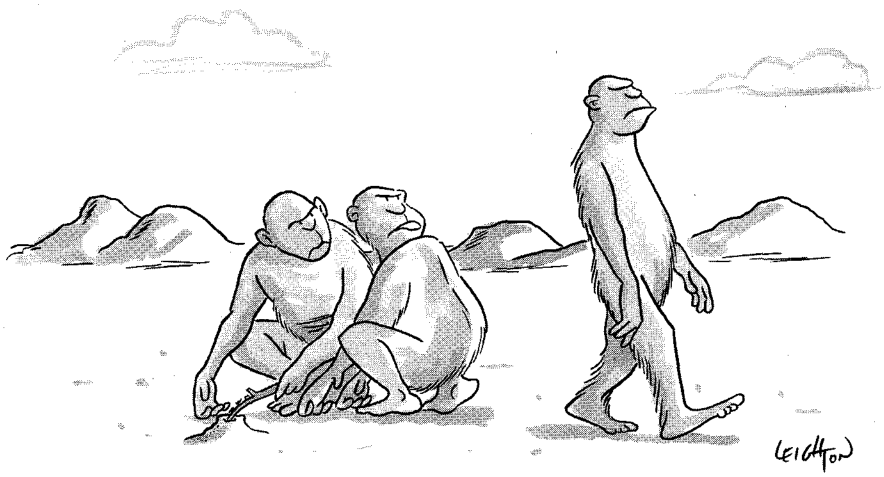
at church each Sunday morning with his wife, Dawn, who works on Capitol Hill for a Republican congressman, and their two young sons.

"Michael is a person of high morality," Yates said, adding that he understands Gerson's attraction to Bush. "The President's vision of spreading democracy is a wonderful, noble vision, and I'm glad he has it, and I'm glad he has Michael. It's just that often we Americans get into a situation where we find that we're not nearly so knowledgeable about the world as we thought we were. Americans seem to be particularly vulnerable to that. Are there people who are not ready for democracy? I hope and pray that people are, but I don't know."



"Well, if it isn't the dawn of civilization."

• •

Gerson drafted much of last month's State of the Union Message, sharing the work with John McConnell and the new chief of speechwriting, William McGurn. The speech had its moments—for instance, the tribute to Coretta Scott King—but it was more quotidian than inspiring, and the next morning I found Gerson in a somewhat deflated mood. "It's always a letdown after a speech," he said. It makes him nervous to attend the event in the House chamber; on the night of the speech, "fidgeting on the couch," he watched at home. "I met a playwright who couldn't watch his plays," Gerson said, by way of explanation.

He thought that Bush gave an excellent performance—"He looked like he was enjoying himself"—but was surprised that lines he expected to win an ovation were greeted with silence. "We had two paragraphs on foreign aid, about the compassion of America, which is unusual for a Presidential speech, and there was no applause," he said. "I don't know—it could be a bad applause line, or it could be a sign that foreign assistance doesn't sell. It happens."

The speech contained several mentions of "compassion." When I suggested to Gerson that there were few ideas to match the sentiment, he disagreed. "There's seventy million dollars to provide more money for people waiting" for AIDS drugs, he said. "There's ninety million for about three million rapid H.I.V. tests, where we're going to focus on the prison population and on I.V.-drug users." But, he went on, "we're living in a different budgetary situation than we were in 2003, when the President could announce a fifteen-billion-dollar AIDS initiative, and that's just a reality. There's nothing that anyone can do about that, and I can't change that."

Nor did Bush say much about faith-based programs, to which even some conservatives have argued that the Administration is insufficiently committed. David Kuo, the former deputy director of the White House program, wrote on Beliefnet.com last year that, when Bush won the Presidency, "there was every reason to believe he'd be not only pro-life and pro-family, as conservatives tended to be, but also pro-poor, which was daringly radical. After all, there were specific promises he intended to keep." But politics stood in the way, Kuo said, and funding disappeared. "Who was going to hold them accountable? Drug addicts, alcoholics, poor moms, struggling urban social-service organizations, and pastors aren't quite the N.R.A." Kuo quit in 2003, in frustration; his predecessor, John DiIulio, has also said that the program had been politicized. Gerson pointed out that Bush promised "twenty-five million dollars for African-American churches and faith-based institutions to do H.I.V./AIDS awareness." When I noted that the amount seemed slight, Gerson said, somewhat apologetically, "It's a start."

Gerson said that he finds backing for his altruistic concerns throughout the Administration—he named Josh Bolten and Karl Rove as allies. Privately, though, he has told friends that he occasionally feels that Bush is his only ally. On such issues as the Iraq war, which occupied a large portion of the State of the Union address, Gerson, like Bush, has never wavered. "The people of the Middle East are not exceptions to this great trend of history, and, by standing up for these things, we are on the right side of history," he said.

I once asked Gerson whether he believed that God put George W. Bush in the White House in order to defeat tyranny. "It's a basic evangelical truth that God is interested in our lives and guides us," Gerson replied. "Just because God's hand was guiding us doesn't mean that he's not guiding other people. It's not exclusive. It's just a sense that God is at work in your life, that things happen for a reason." He also believes that God has a plan for him. His heart attack, which might have scared others into semi-retirement, helped him focus on important things—his family, most notably, and his work, he said. "God gave me a set of talents, and I want to use them to do what is right." ♦

DON'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT DEPARTMENT

From the Boston Globe.

Because of a reporting error, Dr. Arleigh Dygert Richardson III, former teacher at Lawrence Academy in Groton, was described in his obituary yesterday as favoring tacky pants with tweed jackets and Oxford shirts. Dr. Richardson favored khaki pants.

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THE SPORTING SCENE

LITTLE WING

When homing pigeons leave home.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

On a bright, breezy Saturday not long ago, Sedona Murphy gave her homing pigeons away. Earlier that morning, the birds had flown around the neighborhood, looping over the shaggy old trees and the peaked rooftops of South Boston before returning to their gray shed in the Murphys' back yard. They then toddled obligingly into their wooden case. These were racing birds, accustomed to being crated and carried, so the close quarters were nothing new, and they had no way of knowing that this was the last time they would ever fly free.

The pigeons were being given away because the Murphys were moving, and the pigeons would not assent to the move. No matter how much nicer the yard would be at the Murphys' new house, in Southborough, a suburb west of Boston, the pigeons would always consider home to be the narrow wooden house on East Fifth Street that the Murphys were leaving behind. If the birds moved to Southborough and ever got out of their coop, they would race back to Fifth Street. Once in a while, pigeons that have to be moved—that is, pigeons whose owners are moving—can bond to a different coop. But, most of the time, birds raised by hand in a coop have no talent for living in the wild, so homing pigeons that have to be moved must be caged for the rest of their lives—they become what are called "prisoners." In the best of circumstances, prisoners are kept in a large aviary, so that they have room to fly even though they can't be let loose; in the worst, they never fly much again.

I got into the Murphys' car with Sedona and her twin brother, Patrick, and their mother, Maggie; the pigeons were in their wooden case in the back seat, muttering to themselves like old men in a bingo hall. The highway was uncrowded. We ticked past several exits, until we were minutes from the headquarters of the South Shore Pigeon Flyers, one of the two dozen or so clubs in Massachusetts for homing-pigeon fanciers, where we would be leaving the birds.

Sedona was quiet. She is thirteen years old, a lean, leggy girl, with the luxuriant golden hair of a princess, but a grave, precise manner. Her posture is elegant. Her diction is occasionally exactly that of a person her age—earlier in the day she had announced, with amazement, that Grand Tetons means "big boobs"—but more often it is startlingly precise and sophisticated. Once when I was visiting her, she was showing one of the pigeons to a friend. The bird was squirming and pecking. Her friend squealed and said she thought the bird was icky. Sedona gave her a look, then turned the bird on its back and said firmly, "Hey! You're being a dominant, dominant bird!"

South Shore Pigeon Flyers is housed in an old brown barn behind the home of the club's president, Damian Le Vangie. When we pulled in, Le Vangie was standing on a small terrace off the second floor of the barn, his head tilted up. Maggie called out a greeting. "I can't come down," Le Vangie said. "I'm waiting for birds." At six that morning, thousands of pigeons from the Boston area had been released near the Berkshire Mountains for a two-hundred-mile race, and Le Vangie's flock was likely to be reaching home any minute; he would need to lure them across an electronic finish line so that their leg bands would trigger the timer used in official scoring.

"We have Sedona's birds," Maggie said.

"Just leave them," Le Vangie said. Spotting a flash of wing in the sky, he swivelled around and began shaking a can full of grain to attract the birds' attention, so they wouldn't dawdle in the air too long before landing. Maggie and Sedona waited for a bit, but Le Vangie wasn't budging. Finally, Sedona placed the case of pigeons near the barn, and then climbed into the car. By the time we got back to the Murphys' house, a friend of the family's, Jim Reynolds, was dismantling Sedona's pigeon coop, restoring it to its original incarnation as a garden shed. Sedona stood at a distance, observing. "It looks empty," she said. "Pigeonless." Maggie watched the demolition with her. Out came the perches, the bird bath, the fifty-pound sacks of pigeon feed; off came the Lucite door the birds hopped through after they'd been flying around and were ready to come home.

This is both the marvellous and the problematical thing about racing pigeons: they have a fixed, profound, and nearly incontrovertible sense of home. Americans move, on average, every five years; pigeons almost never move. This gives the hobby of raising homing pigeons a curious permanence, a fixedness in space. It's as if you had pasted your stamp collection on your bedroom walls and then, when it came time to move, you couldn't get it unglued. The Murphys' new house didn't have an aviary, so Maggie felt the best solution was to persuade Sedona to give the pigeons to people in her racing club who did. Other pigeon racers, facing the same problem, decide they just can't move. I spent much of this past racing season with Sedona and with Matt Moceri, who flies his birds with the Gloucester Racing Club, north of Boston. Matt, who is fifty-six, is slight and dark-haired, with a foghorn voice and a cheery manner. He has been raising birds since 1982, and always keeps a flock of at least sixty. Matt has lived in the same house in Gloucester for almost his entire life, but he would love to leave the cold, wet winters there for somewhere pleasant, like Tampa, Florida. He began to feel this most acutely five years ago, when he learned that he had cancer. "My wife wants to get something in Florida before I croak," he said to me recently. "But I can't do it with the birds. They belong to this house."

If, in the Kentucky Derby, all the horses were trucked together to some remote spot and set loose, then galloped back to their respective barns, where they crossed a finish line, and their times were then compared and ranked in order by a race secretary (factoring in the difference in the distances to the various barns), you would have the equivalent of a pigeon race. It is the inverse of a group spectator sport. Birds in a race are all together only when they are first let go, which is done by a truck driver who transports all the competitors—thousands of them, in the big races—to the release point. None of the bird owners watch the start of the race, because the birds travel as fast as sixty miles per hour and they fly direct, so if the owners watched the start of the race they would probably miss being home to see the birds return. There is no gathering of owners to watch the end of the race, either: everyone wants to see his own flock come back to his own coop. "You hang out in the yard by yourself, waiting," a pigeon racer recently explained to me. "You put on some music or the baseball game, have a cocktail, and just watch the friendly skies."

Homing pigeons find their way on instinct, but they need practice. Pigeon racers get up early, because practice sessions—known as "training tosses"—are usually done at dawn, before it's too hot for flying, and most people drive their birds farther and farther away, several days a week, to build their stamina and to strengthen their attachment to home. The American Racing Pigeon Union oversees two racing seasons each year—one in the spring, for birds more than a year old, and one in the fall, for young birds. The races are held regionally each week, and range from one hundred to six hundred miles. Some races have cash awards for winners—up to several thousand dollars in some cases, and one series of races in South Africa has a purse of a million dollars. But, most of the time, you do it just for the thrill of it, and you get nothing but glory.

There are scores of pigeon breeds, all

Sedona Murphy with one of her birds. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

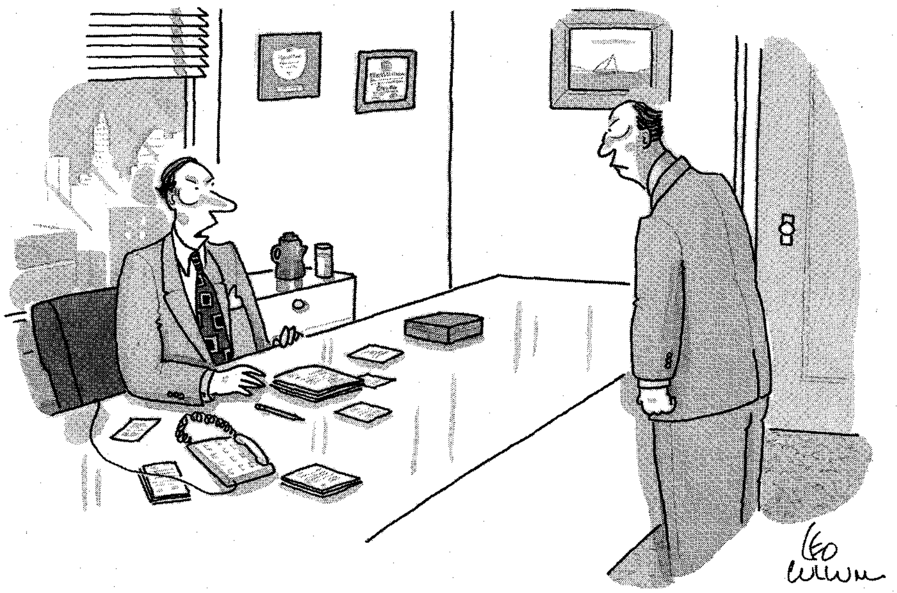
of them varieties of the rock dove, the bird you see in cities. Fancy breeds—such as pygmy pouters, oriental frills, and short-faced tumblers—are raised for show and for performance. Homing pigeons are raised to race home. Their ability to find their way—and their choice to do so—has been remarked upon since before the Roman Empire. The Egyptians and Turks trained pigeons to carry messages; dynastic China used pigeons to carry mail. It is rumored that Count Rothschild used the early news of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, delivered to him by pigeon, to manipulate investments; in the nineteenth century, Paul Julius Reuter founded his news service as a string of pigeon posts; London stock-market quotations were regularly conveyed from London to Antwerp by bird. Pigeons have been used by the German, French, Dutch, English, Belgian, and American armies to carry microfilm and messages. Some military birds conducted surveillance. "If you should ever wake up in the morning and see perched on your window sill an uncanny little bird pointing a miniature camera at you, you might be sure that he was a United States feathered photographer," Marion Cothren wrote in her book "Pigeon Heroes," in 1944. "Not to be outdone by Germany, Russia and Japan, our Pigeon Service trained . . . these birds to carry two-inch aluminum cameras attached to their breasts. . . . These clever camera-birds were used to photograph troops or ammunition dumps." During the Second World War, a pigeon was cited for bravery by the American Army: during a storm, the bird, known as U.S. 1169, carried a distress message to shore from a foundering Coast Guard vessel. Between 1943 and 1949, the Dickin Medal—a British award for animal bravery—was bestowed on thirty-two pigeons, nearly twice the number given to hero dogs.

Pigeon racing, as a competitive sport, was developed in Belgium in the early nineteenth century, when messenger birds were bred to have greater endurance and speed. By the eighteen-eighties, races of five hundred to a thousand miles were held regularly in Europe and the United States. There have been changes in the sport since then. Electronic finish lines were introduced ten years ago; before that, racers had to grab their birds as they entered the coop and remove their leg bands, to stamp them in a manual timer. There is now racing-team software ("Pigeon Loft Organizer . . . a quick and easy way for you to manage all your pigeon data . . . records, pedigrees, race results"). There are husbandry practices to stimulate stronger feather growth. There is pigeon feed on the market that contains magnetic particles, and is touted to help navigation. There are techniques to increase speed, including a system called "widowhood," in which mating pairs are kept apart, to increase their longing for each other—and, accordingly, to increase their haste to get home. But, fundamentally, the sport has remained unchanged for more than a hundred years. It is simply a contest to see whose birds are fastest coming back to their coop.

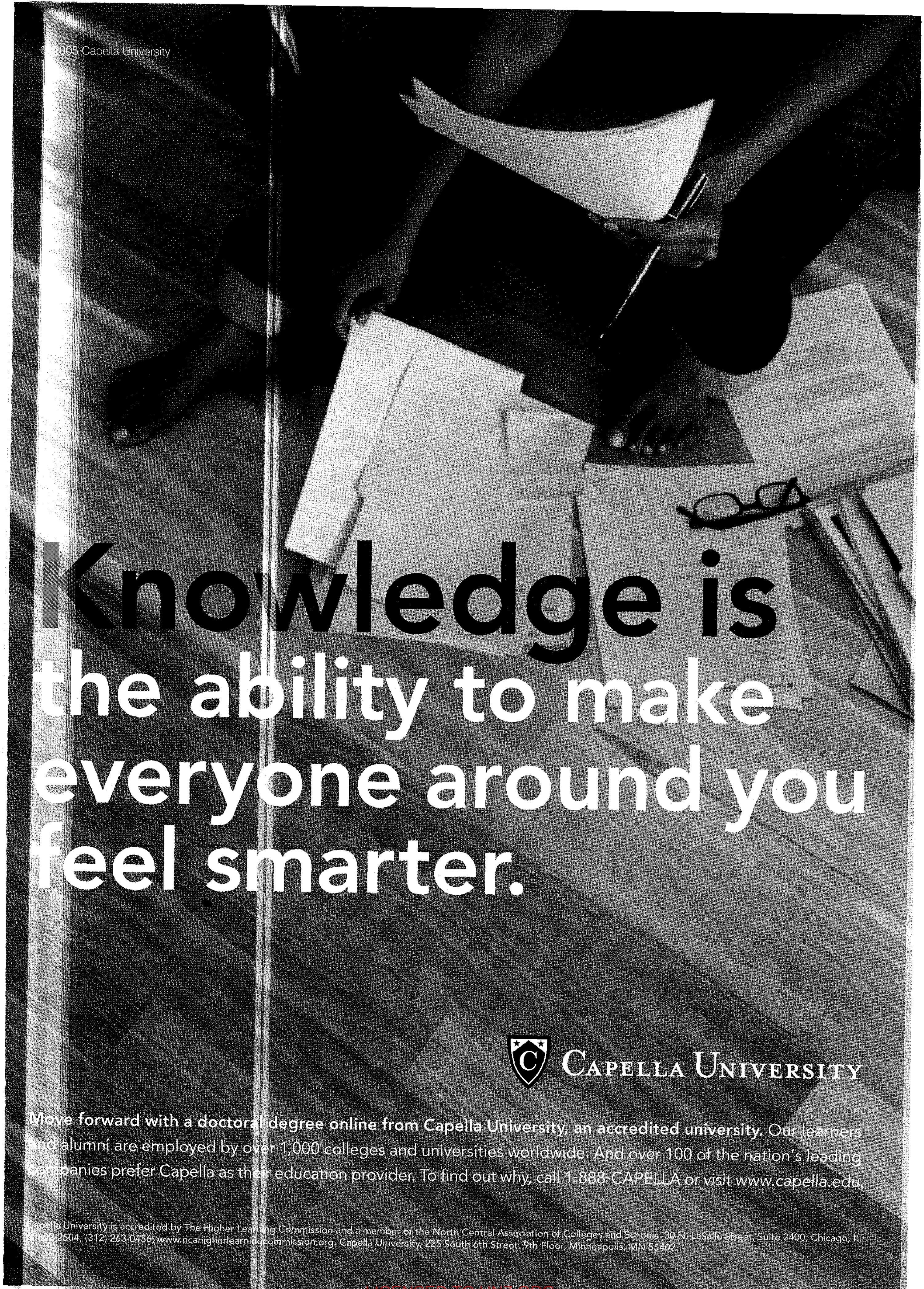
No one is exactly sure how the birds do it. Scientists have been studying homing pigeons for decades; at Cornell, experiments have been conducted on them since 1967. Inertial routing—the theory that the birds register the physical experience of the journey and retrace it—cannot entirely account for their ability. Nor can navigation by sight (pigeons fitted with translucent contact lenses are still able to find home); sun-compassing (pigeons can find their way home on overcast days); smell; sound; infrasound; telepathy; or magnetic sensitivity. Many biologists now believe that pigeons use some combination of these. The sentimental explanation is that if pigeons like where they live they use all their animal instincts—which are beyond our capacity to measure—to find their way. Sedona believes that magnetism has something to do with it, but she mostly subscribes to this notion. "I believe it's the love of the loft," she told me. "They return to where they feel is their home."

Occasionally, birds get lost. They might be blown off course and can't correct themselves. Cell-phone transmissions are suspected of interfering with their steering. In 1998, twelve hundred birds competing in a race from Virginia to Pennsylvania went off course; more than half of them were never seen again, and no one knows why they went astray. At a St. Peter's Fiesta on the north shore of Massachusetts a few years ago, someone released a hundred white pigeons, assuming that they would make a nice addition to the event and would head back home immediately. Weeks after the fiesta ended, the birds were still fluttering around the area, lost and disoriented. One of Sedona's favorite pigeons, Soleil, went missing after a training toss. Sedona says she thinks she's seen him a few times since then, wandering the streets of downtown Boston. Her birds are so attached to her that they will come when she calls, but Soleil seemed to have found a new home.

Most of the time, though, homing pigeons can be counted on. Last



"Must you answer every question with a death threat?"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fall, I went with Matt Moceri on a training toss with a few dozen of his birds and those of some pigeon-racing friends. He was planning to let the birds go in a parking lot in Greenfield, Massachusetts, about a hundred miles away. It was soon after sunrise when we arrived. There was an emu ranch next to the parking lot, and as we pulled in we could see the birds at the ranch peering at us through the fence. There were about a thousand pigeons in the pickup. As soon as Matt opened their cages, the pigeons poured out like water, and then whooshed into the sky and disappeared into the morning. I couldn't believe they would find their way home, or want to. At the very least, I figured, we would have several hours of waiting time in Gloucester before we would catch a glimpse of any of them. But when we got back to Matt's house and walked into his yard, I could see all of his birds lined up on the roof of their coop, burbling and cooing, shuffling and bowing, as if they were performing the finale of a magic trick.

You can buy a racing pigeon for a hundred dollars, or you can spend thirty thousand dollars or more for birds from champion racing stock. In general, the costs are reasonable—pigeon feed is about twenty-five cents a pound; basic gear costs a few hundred dollars; club membership and racing fees are about two hundred and fifty dollars a year. The biggest expenses are an electronic timer, which can run close to a thousand dollars, and veterinary bills, if your birds get sick. Sedona got her first pigeons a couple of years ago, as a gift from a friend of Maggie's, Bill Hussey, who calls his hundred-bird racing team Hussey-N-Da Lofts. Sedona was crazy about animals—at the time, the family already had an Australian shepherd, a cat, and a gecko—and she was especially fascinated by birds. When she was small, she liked to lie on the grass in the park near home and study wild pigeons for hours. To train Sedona's birds for racing, Maggie had to wake at 5 A.M., wait for someone to come and watch the kids, drive the birds as much as an hour away, release them, then drive to police headquarters, where she is a detective, and start her workday. Maggie is divorced from the children's father. "I think my father had a parrot once, but he had to give it away," Sedona said. "I think he was allergic to it, and it didn't like women." Several years ago, the Murphys' neighbors, Jim and Mary Reynolds, began walking the Murphys' dog during the day. The Reynoldses are both deaf and they have no children; walking the Murphys' dog led them to more involvement with Sedona and Patrick, and over time the Reynoldses have become like grandparents to them, babysitting while Maggie is at work, helping with projects around the house. The attachment is powerful. When Maggie told them that they were moving to Southborough, the Reynoldses decided that even though they'd been in the neighborhood for decades it might be time for them to move, too.

Hussey gave Sedona two baby birds, Soleil and Stella Luna, and when she joined South Shore Pigeon Flyers some club members gave her several more. The birds mated; she then had a flock of eighteen. At first, the pigeons lived in the house, in an old rabbit cage, which caused the dog, the cat, and the gecko to be somewhat discomfited. After it became impossible to walk through the kitchen without crunching on pigeon feed, Maggie bought a garden shed to use as a coop. Jim erected it at the far end of the long, narrow back yard. He had grown up nearby, and, as a kid, had friends with homing pigeons, so he knew how to care for them and helped Sedona run the coop. Patrick liked the birds and spent some time with them, but he is more of a dog-and-cat guy; it was Sedona who fell in love. She thought the pigeons were beautiful—"I know people think they're plain or even homely," she said, "but I think they're little works of art"—and she loved seeing them in competition. She raced her young birds in the one- and two-hundred-mile races. She lost a few to hawks and to misdirection, and a few more to a virus that spread through the birds in the club, and she knew she was up against grownups with flocks of two hundred pedigreed racing champions, but she was still proud of her birds. One day when I was visiting her, she showed the birds to me, lifting and turning them every which way so that I could see their features, commenting on each one's potential with the meticulousness of an auctioneer touting yearling colts at Keeneland. "This one's texture is really excellent. . . .This one's coloration is called a

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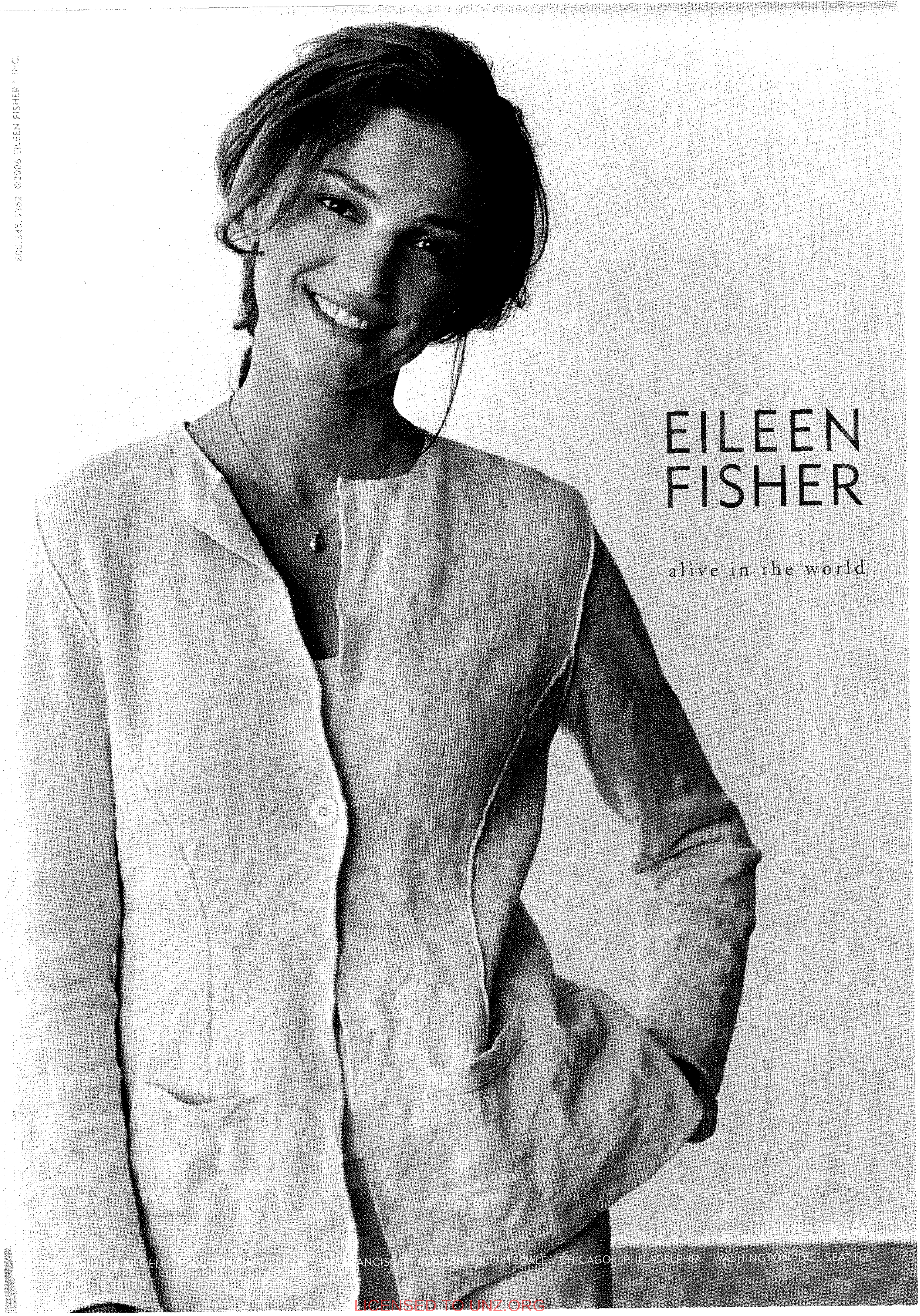
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white grizzle, a beautiful bird. . . . This one has a proud chest. . . . This one, Patches, is too fat. We have to get her on a diet. . . . Lightning has very good genetics."

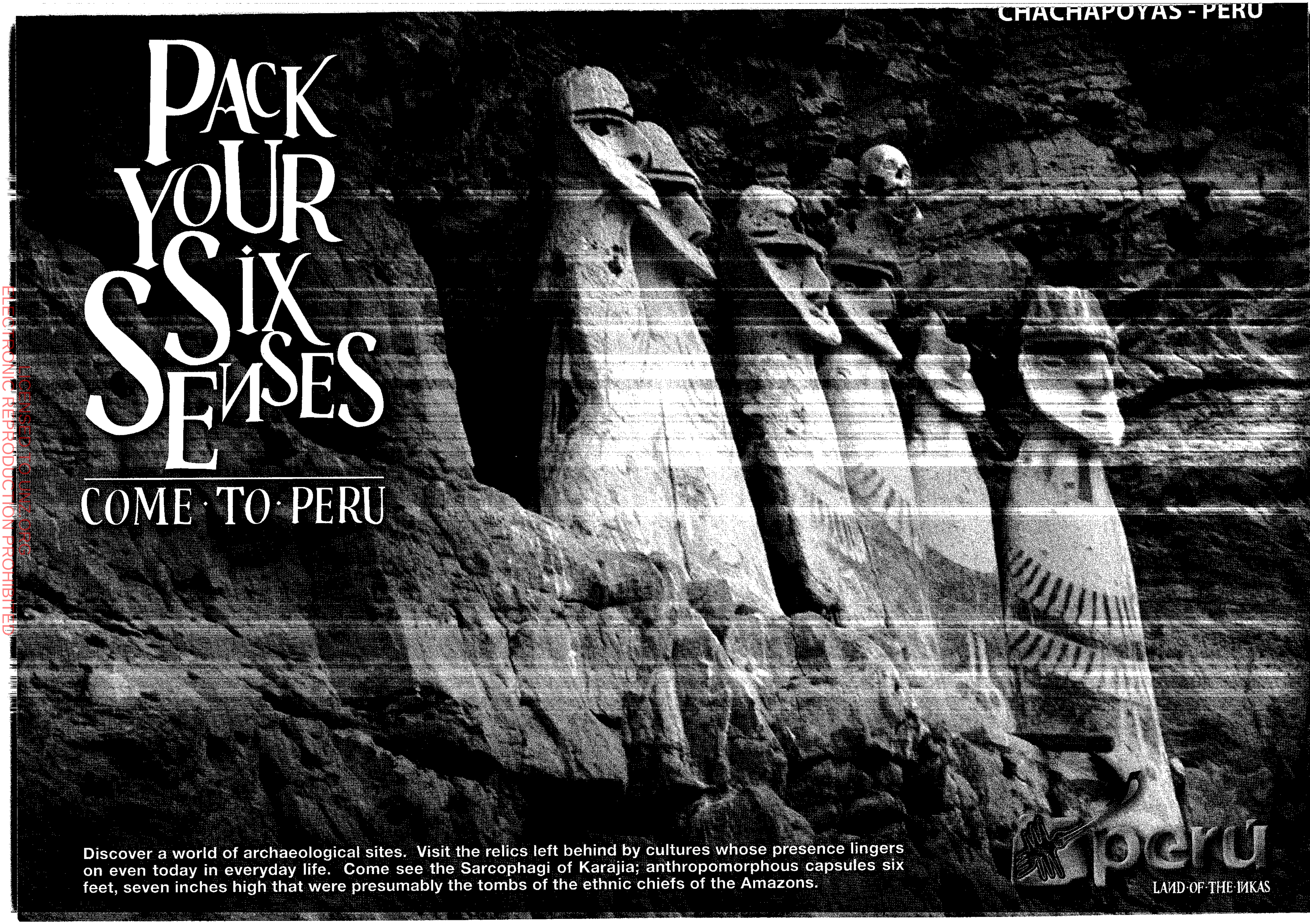
By this time, Maggie had already made the decision to move: a hopscotch of packing boxes stretched from the front to the back door, and real-estate pamphlets lay in a heap on the kitchen table. It hadn't been an easy decision: the house had been in Maggie's family since the early nineteen-hundreds. But the neighborhood had changed, Maggie explained to me. Everyone she knew was moving away, and the new neighbors were the type to scold her kids for goofing around too close to their yards or playing tag in the street. She had found a handsome old house in Southborough, on almost an acre of land. It would give them all sorts of space, compared with South Boston, where the houses crowd in on one another.

Sedona plays baseball and soccer, and is an accomplished ballerina, but giving up the birds was a blow. Figuring them out was more compelling to her than figuring out how to hit a line drive or perform a jeté. Even when she knew that she would never again see her pigeons floating over the top of the house and zooming back to the coop, she doted on them, dreamily speculating about which birds might have made a mark in the races. Her successes had been modest—her best finish was her bird S.J., who came in forty-ninth in a race of three hundred birds. But, still, the possibilities seemed limitless. One hot afternoon near the end of summer, we sat out near the coop talking about the move. She allowed as how the new house was big and nice, and then she changed the subject and said she wanted to give the birds a bath and show me how affectionate they were with her, almost like dogs. The coop was tiny—we just fit in, crowding through the door—but it was clean and pleasant, filled with the odd, almost noiseless sound of the birds, a sort of cadenced vibration, like an unplugged electric guitar being strummed. Sedona picked up a dappled tan pigeon and hugged it close. "You know," she said, "you can actually become a millionaire from your birds."

There persists in Sedona's mind the possibility that she will get her birds back someday—that she and her mother will build a huge aviary at the new house, and even though the birds would be prisoners they would live there happily. Recently, she has also said she might consider raising show pigeons, rather than pressing her mother to reclaim the birds she gave away. She thinks show pigeons are gorgeous; she had seen one riding on the back of a dog at a circus and was very impressed. Moreover, they are fat and placid, flying in somersaults if they fly at all, rather than always yearning to race home.

As a pigeon flyer, Sedona is atypical. Fans of the sport are mostly male and largely middle-aged or older. The pigeon clubs are clubby. The motto of the Greater Boston Concourse—the governing body of the pigeon clubs in the Boston area—is "Camaraderie Through Competition." On the nights before races, members gather at their clubhouses to wait for the truck to collect their birds, but also to play cribbage, watch sports on TV, have a few drinks, tell dirty jokes. Maggie preferred to take Sedona and her birds to the South Shore Pigeon Flyers headquarters early; they would chat for a short time and head right home. Pigeon devotees have included Mike Tyson, Walt Disney, Picasso (who named one of his daughters Paloma, which is Spanish for dove), Marlon Brando (as Terry Malloy in "On the Waterfront"), Roy Rogers, and King George V. Pigeon racing is not demographically diverse but it is multinational. In Belgium, its popularity is said to be on a par with cycling and soccer; it is thriving in England (where not long ago one exceptional racing pigeon sold for nearly two hundred thousand dollars) and in the rest of Europe (where videotapes about pigeon-racing stars like Marcel Sangers, "the Wonderboy of Holland," are marketed with taglines like "Racing in the hotbed of Zutphen against some of the sport's giants, Marcel has achieved what many can only dream about"). The sport is fashionable in the Middle East, and the Taiwanese have gone mad for it. Prize money in Taiwan's biggest races can reach three million dollars, and gambling on them is commonplace; so is pigeon-related crime, including stringing gigantic nets across the route of a race and holding the trapped birds for ransom, and sneaking birds onto airplanes to hurry them to the finish line. Sharing affection for pigeons seems to fill people with an all-embracing global emotion. "Whatever language and whatever country you're in," the president of the American Racing Pigeon Union, Frank Greenhall, said recently, "you sit down with a pigeon man and you speak one language—pigeon."

The American Racing Pigeon Union has ten thousand members and oversees eight hundred clubs around the country; another several hundred clubs are affiliated with the International Federation of American Homing Pigeon Fanciers. Still, the numbers aren't what they once were—for instance, there are about half as many members in Boston-area clubs as there were twenty years ago. Where have all the pigeon flyers gone? Some complain of weariness with the never-ending care that the sport requires, compared with a pastime like golf, and it has also become more difficult lately to keep a pigeon coop—concerns about disease and about whether the sport violates animal rights have prompted some cities to start regulating coops, and Chicago has made it unlawful to keep pigeons at all. The resurgence of hawks has made some people quit in frustration after their well-trained racing teams get eaten. But, recently, newcomers from China and Vietnam have begun joining the sport in the United States, and people who love pigeons see other signs to be hopeful. Last summer, I went to Fall River, Massachusetts, to attend the annual auction and picnic at the racing club there. Greenhall was addressing the crowd. "People keep saying the sport is dying, but the sport is bigger than ever before," he said, over the din of kids shouting at each other in the SpongeBob SquarePants bounce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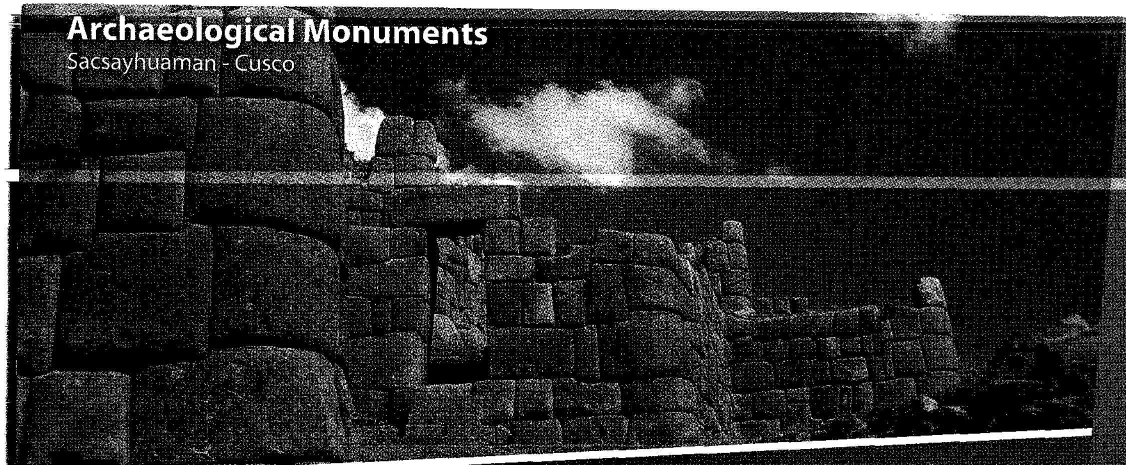
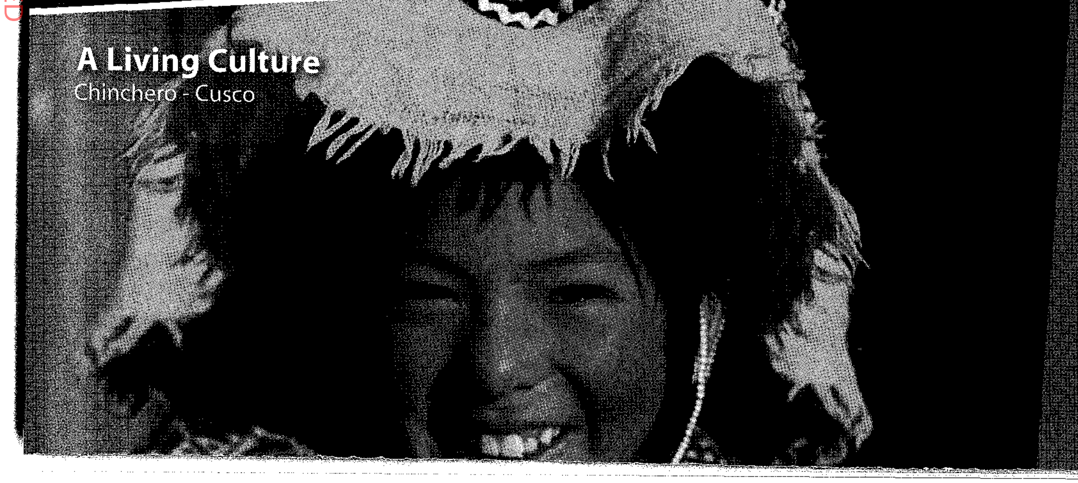


Archaeological Monuments
Sacsayhuaman - Cusco

Nature and Biodiversity
Pampa Galera - Ayacucho



A Living Culture
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Archaeological Monuments

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Discover a world of archaeological sites that date back before Inca times. Visit the relics left behind by cultures whose presence lingered long after they were conquered.

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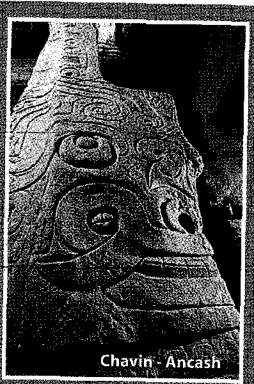
Witness the ancient imperial Chimu culture, dating from 1100 BC at the remains of Chan Chan, the largest adobe brick city in South America. Located deep inside the northern desert, archaeologists still puzzle over how such an advanced culture developed in this harsh environment.

Another spectacular pre-Inca site is the fortress of Kuelap, a walled city built from stone at 9,840 feet above sea level and surrounded by cloud forest. From the Chachapoyas culture, which means "the cloud people", this site lies at the summit of a mountain and is thought to have taken 200 years to build (from 1100 to 1300 BC).

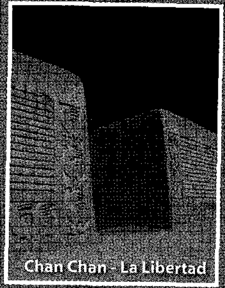
Best seen by air, the famous Nasca Lines create a final memorable experience. One of Peru's great mysteries, these geometric lines form animal figures, and date back to 500 BC. The site is believed to have been used as a huge astronomical calendar.

Pack your six senses, Come to Peru.

Machu Picchu - Cusco



Chavin - Ancash



Chan Chan - La Libertad

A Living Culture

The celebration of almost 3,000 popular feasts per year is but one small hint of the vast treasure trove of multicultural traditions you will find here. From the coast to the jungle and through the highlands, Peruvian people live the same way as their ancestors did a thousand years ago; maintaining their dances, handcrafts, textiles, customs and keeping their spirit alive.

"Qoyllur Rit'i" -the feast of the Shining Snow- is one of Peru's most incredible expressions of faith and tradition. Starting on Trinity Sunday, more than 70,000 people come together at the Sinakara Valley in the province of Quispicanchis, Cusco, to embark on a pilgrimage of hope to the top of a snow covered mountain, 15,090 feet above sea level. After a 5 mile walk, thousands of dancers, hundreds of bands and countless believers finish their journey toward the "Apus" -the mountain gods- asking for money, love, luck, or whatever else they feel they are lacking.

Most of these people will speak Quechua -the mother-tongue of more than 3 million Peruvians- or any of the 91 other indigenous languages that are still in use. Aguaruna, Machiguenga and Huitoto are just some of the native tongues that survive in the jungle, keeping the voices of our forefathers intact, along with their customs.

Almost all of the native handcrafts you'll see are made of natural elements like bones, feathers and seeds that are collected to create beautiful pieces of art. Medicine here is based on the use of plants and herbs that have been used for hundreds of years. This practice is so widespread, Peru's Ministry of Health has an office dedicated to it.

Venture up into the highland and through the Andes, and you will find that the remains of the Incas are all around. Whether you're walking through the stone roads of the Inca Trail-built 500 years ago but still in use today- or viewing the innovative "andenes" -terrace farming- you'll witness how the present meets the past.

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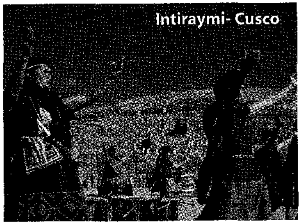
Native of the Jungle

Dancer of Scissors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Nature and Biodiversity

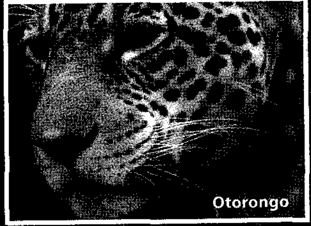
Peru, a country with more bird species than all of North America and Europe combined. With over 120 species that can't be found anywhere else in the world.

Imagine waking up with the magic sound of thousands of parrots and macaws -an unforgettable experience- as they arrive each morning for their daily supplement of mud. Or the sight of a beautiful male Andean Cock-of-the-Rock against the backdrop of the Inca fortress of Machu Picchu.

Peru is a land of vast biodiversity - of the 104 life zones known in the world, 84 exist in Peru. Where you'll find almost every type of habitat imaginable: from the bleak deserts and dry forests of the coast to the Puna grassland and snow-capped mountains of the Andes, to the multitude of forests within the Amazonian lowlands. Peru is blessed with an abundance of life forms -mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, butterflies, trees, cacti, orchids, and more - that complete the beauty of its fascinating landscapes.

Pack your six senses, Come to Peru.

Espectacled bear, Chaparri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house, a group of men discussing the virtues of the birds being auctioned, and people jostling in line for barbecue. "For instance," Greenhall continued, "we are close to having the Boy Scouts recognize pigeon racing as a merit badge. . . . We have nine school systems using pigeons to teach math and science." He looked around the picnic, nodding with satisfaction, and added, "We even have prisons starting pigeon racing!"

There are just a handful of female pigeon flyers, but what really set Sedona apart was her age. She was well known in the Boston pigeon-racing world because there are so few kids in the sport. I once asked her if that distinction was actually kind of cool. "The other people in the club were not exactly fun," she said, slowly. "But they were, um, interesting." The pigeon people I met found their failure to interest their own children in it exasperating. They said their children thought pigeons were too much work; they complained that their kids were only into computers, that their sons were only interested in girls. Some people I met had first taken up pigeon racing as children and then abandoned it, and had returned to it later in life. I thought this would have assured them that their kids would eventually find their way to the sport. But many of them had an uneasiness, a foreboding that, regardless of the good news about the Boy Scouts and math classes and prisons, and the fact that more people are joining the sport as families these days, it is on the wane. That worry seemed to be also an expression of their ambivalence about a pastime that is unusually confining. The morning of the Greenfield training toss, I waited for Matt in the parking lot of a Wal-Mart, along with five other pigeon racers. It was five-forty-five in the morning. I asked one of the racers how he was, and he said, "Honestly, I'm tired. I mean . . . I'm driving out here and I'm asking myself, I'm getting up at 5 A.M. for some bird?"

Matt is the race secretary of the Greater Boston Concourse, and yet he confided to me that he thinks he is starting to talk himself out of being a pigeon racer. Still, even though he has set his birds free and watched them return hundreds and hundreds of times, he seems exhilarated each time they lift into the air and then miraculously reappear at home. That morning in the parking lot, he was eager to take the birds out to Greenfield and let them fly. "Hey, let's get these birds and get going!" he hollered. "We're four minutes late already!"

The day we went to Greenfield, some of Matt's other birds were flying in a race. The release was in Ilion, New York, about two hundred miles from Boston—224.592 miles from Matt's coop, to be exact, for purposes of calculating their time and speed. Matt was rushing back to Gloucester so he could see his flock come home. He was feeling optimistic, even though he was not having the best season of his career. "Since I've been sick, I haven't done so well, so everyone likes me," he said, slapping the steering wheel. "When my birds were doing really well, there was lots of envy. With pigeon guys, there are always lots of feuds." His cell phone rang. "Birds went up at seven-forty-five," he said. "O.K., good luck." Within a minute, the phone rang again; he gave the same message. During the rest of the drive back to Gloucester, his phone rang every few moments. Matt was in a philosophical mood. Before he became ill, he did construction and remodelling work; now he devotes his time to tending his birds and puttering around the house and speculating about the future. His wife, Joan, often drives to the training tosses, because he tires easily. She probably has more pigeon business in her life than she counted on. Matt underwent chemotherapy, and for a year he was too sick to clean the coop and feed the birds, so Joan did it all herself and developed a lung condition that can be caused by exposure to bird dander. Their vacations are limited to times when they can find someone to bird-sit. "And whenever we do go on vacation, I spend some time doing pigeons," Matt said. "I leave Joan at the pool and go find some pigeon guys. I have to."

The day was hot and still. When we got back to Gloucester, we sat in the yard, listening to the cicadas click and the leaves on a huge maple tree beside his house rustle and sigh. I mentioned what a beautiful tree it was. "Well, it is," Matt said. "It's just that it blocks my view of the birds when they're heading in." He had a cordless phone next to him, which rang every few minutes. "Hello, Louie. . . . No, I don't have any birds yet. . . . O.K., good luck." He checked his watch, checked the sky, checked his watch again. The phone rang again. "No, John, I don't have any yet." Another ring. He turned the ringer off, saying he didn't want to know whose birds were back. His own team was late. "I'm disgusted," he said. "I don't want to talk to anybody."

I asked Matt if he knew Sedona; he remembered meeting her briefly, at a pigeon auction. I wondered if he had considered taking some of her birds. He laughed. "No way," he said, shaking his head. He mentioned that he and Joan would be vacationing in Tampa soon; their son had agreed to take care of the pigeons. Increasingly, Tampa is where pigeon guys go to retire; Frank Greenhall told me that a subdivision near Tampa has been nicknamed Little Belgium, because of all the pigeon fanciers who have moved in. Maybe while they were down there, Matt said, he and Joan would look at real estate. On a day like this, with his team underperforming, the idea of moving seemed more palatable, maybe even appealing. "I love my birds," he said, "but I always wonder why I'm doing this." He suddenly bolted to his feet, pointing past the maple. "I got a bird!" he yelled. I could see a dark shape gliding around the crown of the tree, spiralling downward; then a bird landed on top of the coop. It was glossy and gray, with pink feet and bright, round eyes. It had just flown two hundred miles on instinct or memory, or perhaps it was drawn back these two hundred miles because it loved where it lived. It was unruffled, composed, as if it had spent the whole morning scratching for feed at home. "C'mon, c'mon," Matt called out, until the bird crossed the finish line, registering its return at 13:15:42. He took a huge breath and then grabbed his phone, hit the speed dial, and shouted, "Hey! Louie! I got a bird!" ♦

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LETTER FROM CHINA

HUTONG KARMA

The many incarnations of a Beijing alleyway.

BY PETER HESSLER

For the past five years, I've lived about a mile north of the Forbidden City, in an apartment building off a tiny alleyway in downtown Beijing. My alley, which has no official name, begins in the west, passes through three ninety-degree turns, and exits to the south. On a map, the shape is distinctive: it looks a little like a question mark, or perhaps half of a Buddhist swastika. The alley is also distinctive because it belongs to one of the few surviving sections of old Beijing. The capital, like most Chinese cities nowadays, has been changing fast—the biggest local map publisher updates its diagrams every three months, to keep pace with development. But the layout of my neighborhood has remained more or less the same for centuries. The first detailed map of Beijing was completed in 1750, under the reign of the great Qing emperor Qianlong, and on that document my alley follows the same route it does today. Xu Pingfang, a Beijing archeologist, has told me that my street may very well date to the fourteenth century, when many sections of the city were originally laid out, under the Yuan dynasty. The Yuan also left the word *hutong*, a Mongolian term that has come to mean "alley" in Chinese. Locals call my alley Little Ju'er, because it connects with the larger street known as Ju'er Hutong.

I live in a modern three-story building, but it's surrounded by the single-story homes of brick, wood, and tile that are characteristic of *hutong*. These structures stand behind walls of gray brick, and often a visitor to old Beijing is impressed by the sense of division: wall after wall, gray brick upon gray brick. But a *hutong* neighborhood is most distinguished by connections and movement. Dozens of households might share a single entrance, and although the old residences have running water, few people have private bathrooms, so public toilets play a major role in local life. In a *hutong*, much is communal, including the alley itself. Even in winter, residents bundle up and sit in the road, chatting with their neighbors. Street venders pass through regularly, because the *hutong* are too small for supermarkets.

There are few cars. Some alleys, like the one I live on, are too narrow for automobile traffic, and the sounds of daily life are completely different from what one would expect in the heart of a city of fifteen million people. Usually I'm awake by dawn, and from my desk I hear residents chatting as they make their way to the public toilet next to my building, chamber pots in hand. By midmorning, the venders are out. They pedal through the alley on three-wheeled carts, each announcing his product with a trademark cry. The beer woman is the loudest, singing out again and again, "*Maaaaiiiii piiiiijiuuuuuu!*" At eight in the morning, it can be distracting—"Buuuuyyyy beeeeeeeeeer!"—but over the years I've learned to appreciate the music in the calls. The rice man's refrain is higher-pitched; the vinegar dealer occupies the lower registers. The knife sharpener provides percussion—a steady click-clack of metal plates. The sounds are soothing, a reminder that even if I never left my doorway again life would be sustainable, albeit imbalanced. I would have cooking oil, soy sauce, and certain vegetables and fruit in season. In winter, I could buy strings of garlic. A vender of toilet paper would pedal through every day. There would be no shortage of coal. Occasionally, I could eat candied crab apple.

I could even make some money from the freelance recyclers. On an average day, a recycler passes through every half hour, riding a flat-bed tricycle. They purchase cardboard, paper, Styrofoam, and broken appliances. They buy old books by the kilogram and dead televisions by the square inch. Appliances can be repaired or stripped for parts, and the paper and plastic are sold to recycling centers for the barest of profits: the margins of trash. Not long ago, I piled some useless possessions in the entryway of my apartment and invited each passing recycler inside to see what everything was worth. A stack of old magazines sold for sixty-two cents; a burned-out computer cord went for a nickel. Two broken lamps were seven cents, total. A worn-out pair of shoes: twelve cents. Two broken Palm Pilots: thirty-seven cents. I gave one man a marked-up manuscript of the book I'd been writing, and he pulled out a scale, weighed the pages, and paid me fifteen cents.

One day in late April, I was sitting at my desk when I heard somebody call out, "Looonnnng haaaaiiiir! Looonnnng haaaaiiiir!" That was an unfamiliar refrain, so I went out into the alley, where a man had parked his cart. He had come from Henan Province, where he worked for a factory that produces wigs and hair extensions. When I asked about business, he reached inside a burlap sack and pulled out a long black ponytail. He said he'd just bought it from another *hutong* resident for ten dollars. He had come to Beijing because it was getting warm—haircut season—and he hoped to acquire a hundred pounds of good hair before returning to Henan. Most of it, he said, would eventually be exported to the United States or Japan.

Peeling plaster on a hutong building reveals slogans from the Cultural Revolution. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

While we were talking, a woman hurried out of a neighboring house, carrying something in a purple silk handkerchief. Carefully, she unwrapped it: two thick strands.

"They're from my daughter," she said, explaining that she'd saved them from the last haircut.

Each ponytail was about eight inches long. The man picked up one and studied it closely, like a fisherman who knows the rules. He said, "These are too short."

"What do you mean?"

"They're no use to me," he said. "They need to be longer than that."

The woman tried to bargain, but she didn't have much leverage; finally she returned home, hair in hand. The man's call echoed as he left the *hutong:* "Looonnnng haaaaiiiir! Looonnnng haaaaiiiir!"

Not long after I moved into Little Ju'er, Beijing stepped up its campaign to host the 2008 Games, and traces of Olympic glory began to touch the *hutong*. In an effort to boost the athleticism and health of average Beijing residents, the government constructed hundreds of outdoor exercise stations. The painted steel equipment is well-intentioned but odd, as if the designer had caught a fleeting glimpse of a gym and then worked from memory. At the exercise stations, people can spin giant wheels with their hands, push big levers that offer no resistance, and swing on pendulums like children at a park. In the greater Beijing region, the stations are everywhere, even in tiny farming villages by the Great Wall. Out there, the equipment gives the peasants a new life-style option: after working a twelve-hour day on the walnut

“Instant message, sire.”

• •

harvest, they can get in shape by spinning a big yellow wheel over and over.

But nobody appreciates the exercise stations more than *hutong* residents. The machines are scattered throughout old parts of the city, tucked into narrow alleyways. At dawn and dusk, they are especially busy—older people meet in groups to chat and take a few rounds on the pendulum. On warm evenings, men sit idly on the machines, smoking cigarettes. The workout stations are perfect for the ultimate *hutong* sport: hanging around in the street with the neighbors.

At the end of 2000, as part of a city-wide pre-Olympic campaign to improve sanitation facilities, the government rebuilt the public toilet at the head of Ju'er Hutong. The change was so dramatic that it was as if a shaft of light had descended directly from Mt. Olympus to the alleyway, leaving a magnificent structure in its wake. The building had running water, infrared-automated flush toilets, and signs in Chinese, English, and Braille. Gray rooftop tiles recalled traditional *hutong* architecture. Rules were printed onto stainless steel. “Number 3: Each user is entitled to one free piece of common toilet paper (length 80 centimetres, width 10 centimetres).” A small room housed a married couple who served as full-time attendants. Realizing that no self-respecting Beijing resident would work in a public toilet, the government had imported dozens of couples from the interior, mostly from the poor province of Anhui. The husband cleaned the men's room; the wife took care of the women's.

The couple in Ju'er Hutong brought their young son, who took his first steps in front of the public toilet. Such scenes occurred across the capital, and perhaps someday the kids will become the Beijing version of Midnight's Children: a generation of toddlers reared in public toilets who, ten years after the Olympics, will come of age and bring hygienic glory to the Motherland. Meanwhile, Ju'er residents took full advantage of the well-kept public space that fronted the new toilet. Old Yang, the local bicycle repairman, stored his tools and extra bikes there, and in the fall cabbage venders slept on the strip of grass that bordered the bathroom. Wang Zhaoxin, who ran the cigarette shop next door, arranged some ripped-up couches around the toilet entrance. Someone else contributed a chessboard. Folding chairs appeared, along with a wooden cabinet stocked with beer glasses.

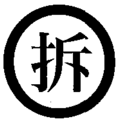
After a while, there was so much furniture, and so many people there every night, that Wang Zhaoxin declared the formation of the “W. C. Julebu”: the W. C. Club. Membership was open to all, although there were disputes about who should be chairman or a member of the Politburo. As a foreigner, I joined at the level of a Young Pioneer. On weekend nights, the club hosted barbecues in front of the toilet. Wang Zhaoxin supplied cigarettes, beer, and grain alcohol, and Mr. Cao, a driver for the Xinhua news service, discussed what was happening in the papers. The coal-fired grill was attended to by a handicapped man named Chu. Because of his disability, Chu was licensed to drive a small motorized cart, which made it easy for him to transport skewers of mutton through the *hutong*. In the summer of 2002, when the Chinese men's soccer team made history by playing in its first World Cup, the W. C. Club acquired a television, plugged it into the bathroom, and mercilessly mocked the national team as it failed to score a single goal throughout the tournament.

Wang Zhaoxin modestly refused the title of chairman, although he was the obvious choice: his entire life had been intertwined with the transformation of modern Beijing. His parents had moved to Ju'er Hutong in 1951, two years after the Communist revolution. Back then, Beijing's early-fifteenth-century layout was still intact, and it was unique among major world capitals: an ancient city virtually untouched by modernity or war.

Beijing had once been home to more than a thousand temples and monasteries, but nearly all of them were converted to other uses by the Communists. In Ju'er, the monks were kicked out of a lamasery called Yuan Tong Temple, and dozens of families moved in, including Wang Zhaoxin's parents. Meanwhile, other members of the proletariat were encouraged to occupy the homes of the wealthy. Previously, such private *hutong* residences had been arranged around spacious open-air courtyards, but during the nineteen-fifties and sixties most of these became crowded with shanties and makeshift structures. The former compound of a single clan might become home to two dozen families, and the city's population swelled with new arrivals. Over the next twenty years, the Communists tore down most of Beijing's monumental gates, as well as its impressive city wall, which in some places was forty feet high. In 1966, when Wang Zhaoxin was a six-year-old elementary-school student, he participated in a volunteer children's work brigade that helped demolish a section of the Ming-dynasty city wall not far from Ju'er. In 1969, during the Cultural Revolution, the nearby Anding Gate was torn down to make room for a subway station. By the time Mao died, in 1976, roughly a fifth of old Beijing had been destroyed.

In 1987, Wang Zhaoxin's younger brother accepted his first job, at a Beijing restaurant. Within months of starting work, the eighteen-year-old lost his right arm in a flour-mixing machine. Not long before that, Wang Zhaoxin had gone into retail, hoping to succeed in the new market economy; now he chose a product line in deference to his brother's disability. Fruit and vegetables are too heavy, he reasoned, and a clothes merchant needs two arms to measure and fold goods. Cigarettes are light, so that's what the Wang brothers stocked.

During the nineteen-nineties and early two thousands, as the Wangs sold cigarettes in Ju'er Hutong, developers sold most of old Beijing. Few sections of the city were protected, in part because local government bureaus often profited from development. Whenever a *hutong* was doomed, its buildings were marked with a huge painted character surrounded by a circle, like the "A" of the anarchist's graffiti:



Chai: "Pull down, dismantle." As developers ran rampant over the city, that character became a talisman—Beijing artists riffed on the shape, and residents cracked *chai* jokes. At the W. C. Club, Wang Zhaoxin used to say, "We live in *Chai nar*." It sounded like the English word "China," but it meant "Demolish where?"

Like many Beijing people I knew, Wang Zhaoxin was practical, good-humored, and unsentimental. His generosity was well known—the locals had nicknamed him Wang Laoshan, Good Old Wang. He always contributed more than his share to a W. C. Club barbecue, and he was always the last to leave. He used to say that it was only a matter of time before the government *chai'd* more buildings in our area, but he never dwelled on the future. More than four decades in *Chai nar* had taught him that nothing lasts forever.

The W. C. Club was near the head of the *hutong*, which ends at Jiaodaokou South Street. That boulevard is busy with streetcars and buses; the nearest intersection is home to a massive

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new apartment complex, two supermarkets, and a McDonald's. Jiaodaokou represents a border: by stepping onto the street, you enter the modern city.

Every day, most working residents of the *hutong* cross that divide. They pass the bicycle-repair stand of Old Yang, who keeps his pumps and his toolbox next to the Olympic toilet. In a *hutong*, there's no better network than one that combines bikes and bathrooms, and Old Yang knows everybody. Occasionally, he gives me messages from other people in the neighborhood; once he passed along the business card of a foreigner who had been trying to track me down. Another time, he told me that the local matchmaker had someone in mind for me.

"College-educated, 1.63 metres tall," he said curtly. Those were the only specs he knew. For Chinese women, 1.6 is a magic number—you often see that figure in job listings and dating ads. It's about five feet three. I told Old Yang that I appreciated the tip but that I didn't want to meet anybody right now.

"Why not? You're not married."

"Well, I'm not in a rush. In my country, people get married later."

When I started to walk away, he told me that he'd already given my phone number to the matchmaker.

"Why did you do that?" I said. "You have to tell her that I'm not interested."

Old Yang is in his sixties, a tall, stern-faced man with a shaved head. When I tried to decline the invitation, his expression became even more serious than usual. He told me that it was too late: everything had already been arranged; he'd look bad if I didn't go. That week, the matchmaker called me four times. She introduced herself as Peng Laoshi—Teacher Peng—and she had scheduled the date for Saturday afternoon. We met beyond the *hutong's* boundary, at the entrance to the Jiaodaokou McDonald's. My date was supposed to arrive in a few minutes, but there was something that Teacher Peng wanted to clarify first.

"This is an underground meeting," she said, after we had found seats in the upstairs section of the restaurant.

"Why?"

"It's not official. We're not allowed to work with foreigners."

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—*Seamus Heaney*

"Why not?"

"The government doesn't want us to," she said. "They're afraid the foreigners will trick Chinese women."

There was a pause, from which the conversation could have proceeded in any number of interesting directions. But Teacher Peng seemed accustomed to filling awkward silences and she spoke fast. "Of course, I'm not worried about you," she said, beaming. "Old Yang says you're a good person."

Teacher Peng was in her mid-forties, and the skin around her eyes was crinkled from smiling so much—a rare characteristic in China. She wasn't an actual teacher; that's simply a title people use for matchmakers. In China, professional matchmakers still play a role in rural areas and small cities, but they've become less important in places like Beijing. Nevertheless, I occasionally see a sign advertising their services, especially in old neighborhoods. Teacher Peng kept a government-registered office in Ju'er.

At McDonald's, I asked Teacher Peng how much she charged, and she said the fee for meeting someone was usually two hundred yuan.

"But it's more to meet a foreigner," she said. "Five hundred, one thousand, even two thousand."

I asked, as delicately as possible, how much today's client would have to pay for me if things worked out.

"One thousand." It was a little more than a hundred and twenty dollars. Even if other foreigners were worth twice as much, there was some consolation in being double the minimum.

"Does she have to pay anything just for meeting today?" I asked.

"No. It's only if you stay together."

"For marriage?"

"No. For more dates."

"How many?"

"That depends."

She wouldn't give me a number, and I kept asking questions, trying to figure out how the system worked. Finally, she leaned forward and said, "Do you hope to get married quickly, or do you just want to spend time with a woman?"

It was a hell of a first-date question for a single male in his thirties. What could I say? I didn't want the bike repairman to lose face. "I really don't know," I stammered. "But I want to make sure that she's not paying anything to meet me today."

Teacher Peng smiled again. "You don't have to worry about that," she said.

When I first moved to the neighborhood, I regarded McDonald's as an eyesore and a threat: a sign of the economic boom that had already destroyed most of old Beijing. Over time, though, *hutong* life gave me a new perspective on the franchise. For one thing, it's not necessary to eat fast food in order to benefit from everything that McDonald's has to offer. At the Jiaodaokou restaurant, it's common for people to sit at tables without ordering anything. Invariably, many are reading; in the afternoon, schoolchildren do their homework. I've seen the managers of neighboring businesses sitting quietly, balancing their account books. And always, always, always somebody is sleeping. McDonald's is the opposite of *hutong* life, in ways both good and bad: cool in summer, warm in winter, with private bathrooms.

It's also anonymous. Unlike Chinese restaurants, where waitresses hover, the staff at a fast-food joint leaves people alone. On a number of occasions, dissidents have asked me to meet them at a McDonald's or a K.F.C., because it's safe. When Teacher Peng told me that our meeting was "underground," I realized why she had chosen the restaurant.

Others apparently had the same idea. One couple sat near the window, leaning close and whispering. At another table, two well-dressed girls seemed to be waiting for their dates. Over Teacher Peng's left shoulder, I kept an eye on a couple who appeared to be having some sort of crisis. The woman was about twenty-five; the man seemed older, in his forties. Their faces shone with the unnatural redness that comes to many Chinese who have been drinking. They sat in silence, glaring at each other. Nearby, the McDonald's Playland™ was deserted. Teacher Peng's pager went off.

"That's her," she said, and asked to borrow my cell phone.

"I'm at McDonald's," she said into the phone. "The Italian is already here. Hurry up."

After Teacher Peng hung up, I tried to say something, but she spoke too fast. "She teaches music at a middle school," she said. "She's a very good person—I wouldn't introduce you otherwise. Good. Listen. She's twenty-four years old. She's pretty and she's 1.64 metres tall. She's educated. She's thin, though. I hope that's not a problem—she's not as voluptuous as the women in your Italy."

There was so much to process—for one thing, my date seemed to be growing taller—and before I could speak Teacher Peng continued: "Good. Listen. You have a good job and you speak Chinese. Also, you were a teacher before, so you have something in common."

Finally, she stopped. I said, "I'm not Italian."

"What?"

"I'm American. I'm not Italian."

"Why did Old Yang tell me you're Italian?"

"I don't know," I said. "My grandmother is Italian. But I don't think Old Yang knows that."

Now Teacher Peng looked completely confused.

"America is an immigrant country," I began, and then I decided to leave it at that.

She recovered her poise. "That's fine," she said with a smile. "America is a good country. It's fine that you come from America."

The woman arrived, wearing headphones. Japanese script decorated her

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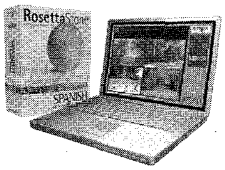

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stylish jacket, and she wore tight jeans. Her hair had been dyed a dark brown. Teacher Peng introduced us, crinkled her eyes one last time, and tactfully took her leave. Very slowly, one by one, the woman removed her headphones. She looked quite young. The CD player sat on the table between us.

I said, "What are you listening to?"

"Wang Fei"—a popular singer and actress.

"Is it good?"

"It's O.K."

I asked her if she wanted anything from the restaurant, and she shook her head. I respected that—why spoil a date at McDonald's by eating the food? She told me that she lived with her parents in a *hutong* near the Bell Tower; her school was nearby. She asked me if I was from the neighborhood.

"I live in Ju'er Hutong."

"I didn't know there were foreigners there," she said. "How much is your rent?"

This being China, I told her.

"That's a lot," she said. "Why do you pay so much?"

"I don't know. I guess they can always charge foreigners more."

"You were a teacher, right?"

I told her that I used to teach English in a small city in Sichuan Province.

"That must have been boring," she said. "Where do you work now?"

I said that I was a writer who worked at home.

"That sounds even more boring," she said. "I'd go nuts if I had to work at home."

Behind her, the drunk couple began arguing loudly. Suddenly the woman stood up, brandished a newspaper, and smacked the man on the head. Then she stormed out, right past Playland™. Without a word, the man folded his arms, lay his head down on the table, and went to sleep.

A moment later, the music teacher asked, "Do you often go back to your Italy?"

The following week, the matchmaker telephoned to see if there was any chance of a second meeting, but she wasn't insistent. She impressed me as a sharp woman—sharp enough to recognize that my cluelessness might be exploited in better ways than dates at McDonald's. The next time I ran into her in the *hutong*, she asked if I wanted to become an investor in a karaoke parlor. After that, I avoided walking past her office.

When I asked Old Yang about the confusion, he shrugged and said that I once mentioned that my grandmother is Italian. I had no memory of the conversation, but I picked up a valuable *hutong* lesson: never underestimate how much the bike repairman knows.

"Give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day. Teach a man to sue, and he'll eat for a lifetime."

Good Old Wang was right about *Chai nar*. For years, he had predicted demolition, and, in September of 2005, when the government finally condemned his apartment building, he moved out without protest. He had already sold the cigarette shop, because the margins had fallen too low. And now there was no doubt who had been the true chairman, because the W. C. Club died as soon as he left the *hutong*.

By then, three-quarters of old Beijing had been torn down. The remaining quarter consisted mostly of public parks and the Forbidden City. Over the years, there had been a number of protests and lawsuits about the destruction, but such disputes tended to be localized: people complained that government corruption reduced their compensation, and they didn't like being relocated to suburbs that were too distant. But it was unusual to hear an average Beijinger express concern for what was happening to the city as a whole. Few spoke in terms of architectural preservation, perhaps because the Chinese concept of the past isn't closely linked to buildings, as it is in the West. The Chinese rarely built with stone, instead replacing perishable materials periodically over the decades.

The *hutong* essence had more to do with spirit than with structure, and this spirit often showed strongest when the neighborhood encountered some modern element: an Olympic toilet, a McDonald's franchise. Pragmatism and resourcefulness were deeply ingrained in residents like Good Old Wang, whose environment had always been fluid. The fundamental character of *hutong* life helped prepare for its destruction.

In 2005, the Beijing government finally issued a new plan to protect the scattered old neighborhoods that remained in the north and west of downtown, including Ju'er. These *hutong* wouldn't be put on the market for developers to build whatever they wished, as they would have been in the past. The stated priority was to "preserve the style of the old city," and the government established a ten-member advisory board to consult on major projects. The board's members included architects, archeologists, and city planners, some of whom had publicly criticized the destruction. One board member told me that it was essentially too late, but that the new plan should at least preserve the basic layout of the few surviving *hutong*. Within that layout, however, gentrification was inevitable—the *hutong* had become so rare that they now had cachet in the new economy.

The change had already begun in my neighborhood. In 2004, bars, cafés, and boutiques started moving into a quiet street that intersects Ju'er, where locals were happy to give up their homes for good prices. The businesses maintained the traditional architectural style, but they introduced a new sophistication to the Old City. Nowadays, if I'm restricted to my neighborhood I have access to Wi-Fi, folk handicrafts, and every type of mixed drink imaginable. There is a nail salon in the *hutong*. Somebody opened a tattoo parlor. The street venders and recyclers are still active, but they have been joined by troops of pedicab men who give "*hutong* tours." Many of the tourists are Chinese.

One recent weekend, Good Old Wang returned for a visit, and we walked through Ju'er. He showed me the place where he was born. "There's where we lived," he said, pointing at the modern compound of the Jin Ju Yuan Hotel. "That's where the temple used to be. When my parents moved in, there was still one lama left."

We continued east, past an old red door that was suspended in the *hutong's* wall, three feet above the street. "There used to be a staircase there," he explained. "When I was a child, that was an embassy."

In the nineteenth century, the compound had belonged to a Manchu prince; in the nineteen-forties, Chiang Kai-shek used it as his Beijing office; after the revolution, it was taken over by Dong Biwu, a founder of the Chinese Communist Party. In the nineteen-sixties, it served as the Yugoslavian Embassy. Now that all of them were gone—Manchus, Nationalists, Revolutionaries, Yugoslavians—the compound was called, appropriately, the Friendship Guesthouse.

That was *hutong* karma—sites passed through countless incarnations, and always the mighty were laid low. A couple of blocks away, the family home of Wan Rong, empress to the last monarch of the Qing dynasty, had been converted into a clinic for diabetics. In Ju'er, the beautiful Western-style mansion of Rong Lu, a powerful Qing military official, had served one incarnation as the Afghanistan Embassy before becoming what it is today: the Children's Fun Publishing Co., Ltd. A huge portrait of Mickey Mouse hangs above the door.

Good Old Wang passed the Olympic toilet ("It's a lot less cluttered than when I was here," he observed), and then we came to the nondescript three-story building where he had lived since 1969. It wasn't a historic structure, which was why it had been approved for demolition. The electricity and the heat had been cut off; we walked upstairs into an abandoned hallway. "This was my room when I was first married," he said, stopping at a door. "Nineteen eighty-seven."

His brother had lost his arm that year. We continued down the hall, to the apartment where Wang had lived most recently, with his wife, his daughter, his father, and his brother. The girl's drawings still decorated the walls: a sketch of a horse, the English phrase "Merry Christmas." "This is where the TV was," he said. "That's where my father slept. My brother slept there."

The family had dispersed; the father and brother now live in a *hutong* to the north; Good Old Wang, his wife, and their daughter are using the home of a relative who is out of town. As compensation for the condemned apartment, Good Old Wang was given a small section of a decrepit building near the Drum Tower. He hoped to fix it up in the spring.

Outside, I asked him if it had been hard to leave the *hutong* after nearly half a century. He thought for a moment. "You know, lots of events happened while I lived here," he said. "And maybe there were more sad events than happy events."

On the way out, we passed an ad for the Beijing Great Millennium Trading Co., Ltd. Later that day, returning home, I saw a line of pedicabs: Chinese tourists, bundled against the cold, cameras in hand as they cruised the ancient street. ♦

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PERSONAL HISTORY

SERIAL MONOGAMY

My cookbook crushes.

BY NORA EPHRON

My mother gave me my first cookbook. It was 1962, and I began my New York life with her gift of "The Gourmet Cookbook" (Volume I) and several sets of sheets and pillowcases (white, with scallops). "The Gourmet Cookbook" was enormous, a tome, with a gloomy reddish-brown binding. It had been assembled by the editors of *Gourmet* and was punctuated by the splendid, reverent, slightly lugubrious photographs of food that the magazine was famous for. Simply owning it had changed my mother's life. Until the book appeared, in the fifties, she had been content to keep as far from the kitchen as possible. We had a wonderful Southern cook named Evelyn Hall, who cooked American classics like roast beef and fried chicken and world-class apple pie. But, thanks to "The Gourmet Cookbook," Evelyn began to cook chicken Marengo and crème caramel; before long, my mother herself was in the kitchen, whipping up Chinese eggrolls from scratch. A recipe for them appears on page 36 of the book, but it doesn't begin to convey how stressful and time-consuming an endeavor it is to make eggrolls, nor does it begin to suggest how much tension a person can create in a household by serving eggrolls that take hours to make and are not nearly as good as Chinese takeout.

Owning "The Gourmet Cookbook" made me feel wildly sophisticated. For years, I gave it to friends as a wedding present. It was an emblem of adulthood, a way of being smart and chic and college-educated where food was concerned, but I never really used it in the way you really use a cookbook: by propping it open on the kitchen counter, cooking from it, staining its pages with spattered butter and chocolate splotches, conducting a unilateral dialogue with the book itself—in short, by having a relationship with it.

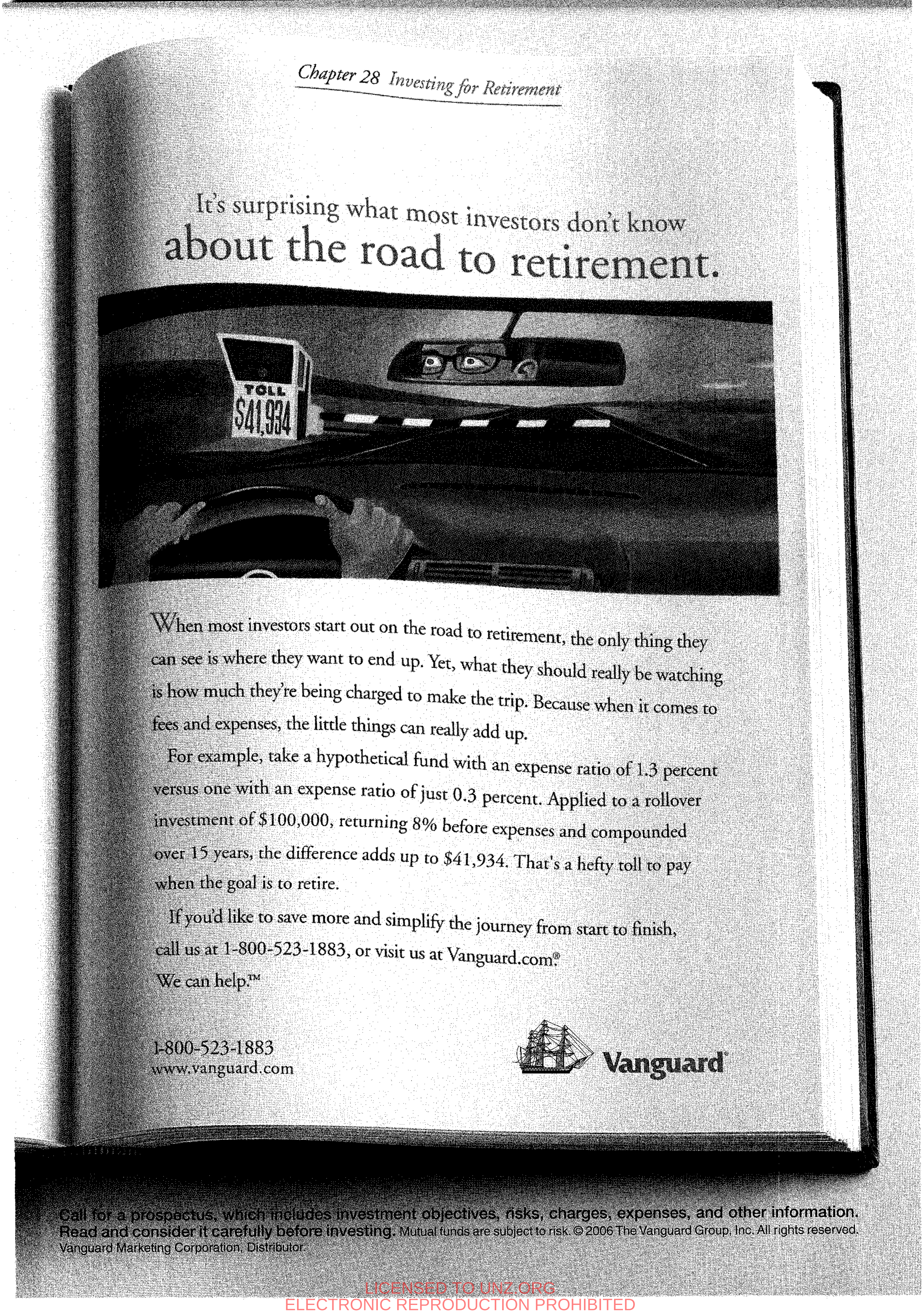
Like most relationships, cookbook-love is all about projection.

LAURIE ROSENWALD

The cookbook I used most during my first year in New York was a small volume called "The Flavour of France." It was given to me by a powerful older woman I'll call Jane, whom I met that summer in the city. She was twenty-five, and she took me in hand and introduced me not just to the cookbook but also to Brie and *vitello tonnato* and the famous omelette place in the East Sixties. In fact, the first time I went to the omelette place, which was called Madame Romaine de Lyon, I was a mail girl at *Newsweek*, making fifty-five dollars a week, and I almost fainted when I saw that an omelette cost $3.45. Jane also introduced me to the concept of One Away. You were One Away from someone if you had both slept with the same man. Jane had slept with a number of up-and-coming journalists, editors, and novelists, the most famous of whom, at the end of their sole night together, gave her a copy of one of his books, a box of which was conveniently situated right next to his front door. According to Jane, his exact words, as she prepared to leave, were "Take one on your way out."

The night President Kennedy was shot, Jane was having a dinner party, which went forward in spite of the tragedy, as these things tend to do. Jane served as an appetizer *céleri rémoulade*, a dish that I had never before encountered and that remains a mystery to me. A few months later, I had a thing with someone Jane had had a thing with. Jane and I were now One Away from one another, and, interestingly, that was the end of our friendship, though not the end of my connection to "The Flavour of France."

"The Flavour of France" was the size of a datebook, just six by eight inches. It contained small blocks of recipe text by Narcissa Chamberlain and her daughter, Narcisse, and large black-and-white travel photographs of France taken by Narcissa's husband (and Narcisse's father), Samuel Chamberlain. I didn't focus much on the curious Chamberlain family as I cooked my way through their cookbook, and, when I did, I usually hit a wall: for openers, I couldn't imagine why anyone named Narcissa would name her daughter Narcisse. Also, I couldn't figure out how they collaborated. Did the three of them drive around France together, fighting over whose turn it was to sit in the back seat? Did Narcisse like working with her parents? And, if so, was she crazy? But the Chamberlains' recipes were simple and foolproof. I learned to make a perfect chocolate mousse that took about five minutes, and a wonderful dessert of caramelized baked pears with cream. I made



Chapter 28 Investing for Retirement

It's surprising what most investors don't know

about the road to retirement.

When most investors start out on the road to retirement, the only thing they can see is where they want to end up. Yet, what they should really be watching is how much they're being charged to make the trip. Because when it comes to fees and expenses, the little things can really add up.

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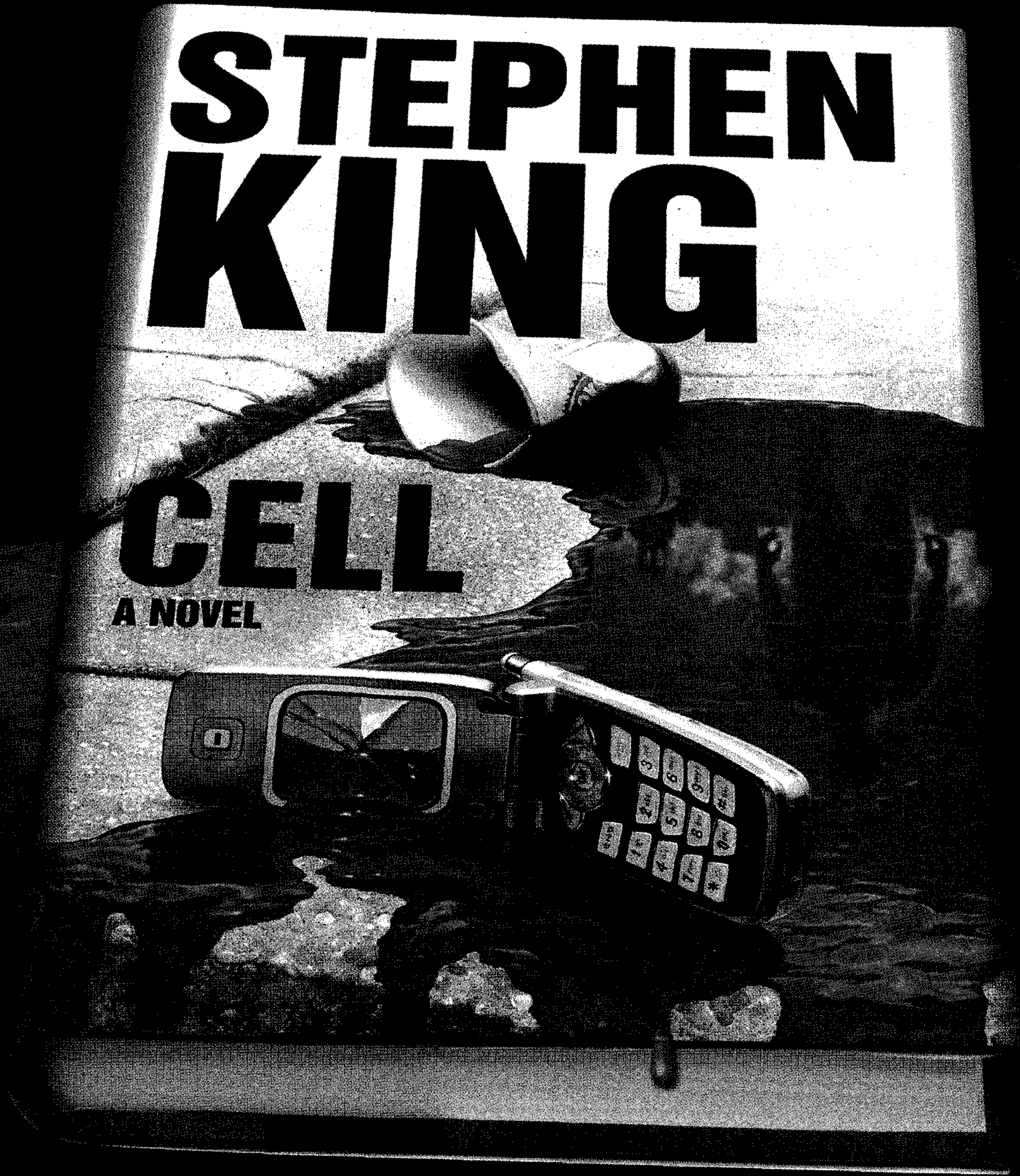

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those pears for years, although chocolate mousse eventually faded from my repertory when the crème-brûlée years began.

Just before I moved to New York, two historic events had occurred: the birth-control pill was invented and the first Julia Child cookbook was published. As a result, everyone was having sex, and when the sex was over you cooked something. One of my girlfriends moved in with a man she was in love with. Her mother was distraught and warned that he would never marry her, because she had already slept with him. "Whatever you do," my friend's mother said, "don't cook for him." But it was too late. She cooked for him. He married her anyway. This was right around the time that arugula was discovered, which was followed by endive, which was followed by radicchio, which was followed by frisée, which was followed by the three M's—mesclun, mache, and microgreens—and that, in a nutshell, is the history of the past forty years from the point of view of lettuce. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

By the mid-sixties, Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," Craig Claiborne's "New York Times Cook Book," and Michael Field's "Cooking School" had become the holy trinity of cookbooks. At this point, I was working as a reporter at the *Post* and living in the Village. If I was home alone at night, I cooked myself an entire meal from one of these cookbooks. Then I sat down in front of the television set and ate it. I felt very brave and plucky as I ate my perfect dinner. O.K., I didn't have a date, but at least I wasn't one of those lonely women who sat home with a pathetic container of yogurt. Eating a meal for four that I had cooked for myself was probably equally pathetic, but it never crossed my mind.

I cooked every recipe in Michael Field's book, and at least half the recipes in the first Julia, and as I cooked I had imaginary conversations with them both. Julia was nicer and more forgiving—she was on television by then and famous for dropping food, picking it up, and throwing it right back into the pan. Michael Field was sterner and more meticulous; he was almost fascistic. He was full of prejudice about things like the garlic press (he believed that using one made the garlic bitter), and I threw mine away for fear that he would suddenly materialize in my kitchen and disapprove. His recipes were precise, and I followed them to the letter; I was young, and I believed that if you changed even a hair on a recipe's head it wouldn't turn out right. When I had people to dinner, I loved to serve Michael's overcomplicated recipe for chicken curry, accompanied by condiments and pappadums—although I sometimes served instead a marginally simpler Craig Claiborne recipe for lamb curry that had appeared in his Sunday column in the *Times Magazine*. There were bananas in it, and heavy cream. I made it recently and it was horrible.

Craig Claiborne worked at the *Times* not just as the chief food writer but also as the restaurant critic. He was hugely powerful and influential, and I developed something of an obsession with him. Craig—everyone called him Craig even if they'd never met the man—was renowned for championing ethnic cuisine, and as his devoted acolyte I learned to cook things like moussaka and tabbouleh. Everyone lived for his Sunday recipes; it was the first page I turned to in the Sunday *Times*. Everyone knew he had a Techbuilt house on the bay in East Hampton, that he'd added a new kitchen to it, that he usually cooked with the French chef Pierre Franey, and that he despised iceberg lettuce. You can't really discuss the history of lettuce in the past forty years without mentioning Craig; he played a seminal role. I have always had a weakness for iceberg lettuce with Roquefort dressing, and that's one of the things I used to have imaginary arguments with Craig about.

For a long time, I hoped that Craig and I would meet and become friends. I gave a lot of thought to this eventuality, most of it concerning what I would cook if he came to my house for dinner. I was confused about whether to serve him something from one of his cookbooks or something from someone else's. Perhaps there was a protocol for such things; if so, I didn't know what it was. It occurred to me that I ought to serve him something that was "my" recipe, but I didn't have any recipes that were truly mine—with the possible exception of my mother's barbecue sauce, which mostly consisted of Heinz ketchup. But I desperately wanted him to come over. I'd read somewhere that people were afraid to invite him to dinner. I wasn't; I just didn't know the man. I must confess that my fantasy included the hope that after he came to dinner he would write an article about me and include my recipes; but, as I say, I didn't have any.

Meanwhile, I got married and entered into a series of absolutely pathological culinary episodes. I wrapped things in phyllo. I stuffed grape leaves. There were soufflés. I took a course in how to use a Cuisinart food processor. I even cooked an entire Chinese banquet that included Lee Lum's lemon chicken. Lee Lum was the chef at Pearl's, the famous Chinese restaurant where no one could get a table. If you did get a table, you remembered the meal forever because there was so much MSG in the food that you lay awake for years afterward. Lee Lum's recipe for lemon chicken involved dipping strips of chicken breast in water-chestnut flour, deep-frying it, plunging it into a sauce that included canned crushed pineapple, and dousing the entire creation with a one-ounce bottle of lemon extract. Once again, the recipe was from the Sunday *Times* column written by Craig Claiborne. Craig, of course, had no difficulty getting a table at Pearl's, and I looked forward to going there with him someday, after we had actually met and become close personal friends. I'd gone to Pearl's once, and was stunned to discover not only that it was impossible to get a table if you weren't famous but that being famous was not enough: there were degrees of famous. There was famous enough to get a table, and then there was famous enough to get Pearl to come to the table to tell you the nightly specials, and then there was true fame, top-of-the-line fame, which was famous enough to get Pearl to allow you to order the sweet-and-pungent crispy fish. This was what it came down to in New York: you had to have pull to order a fish.

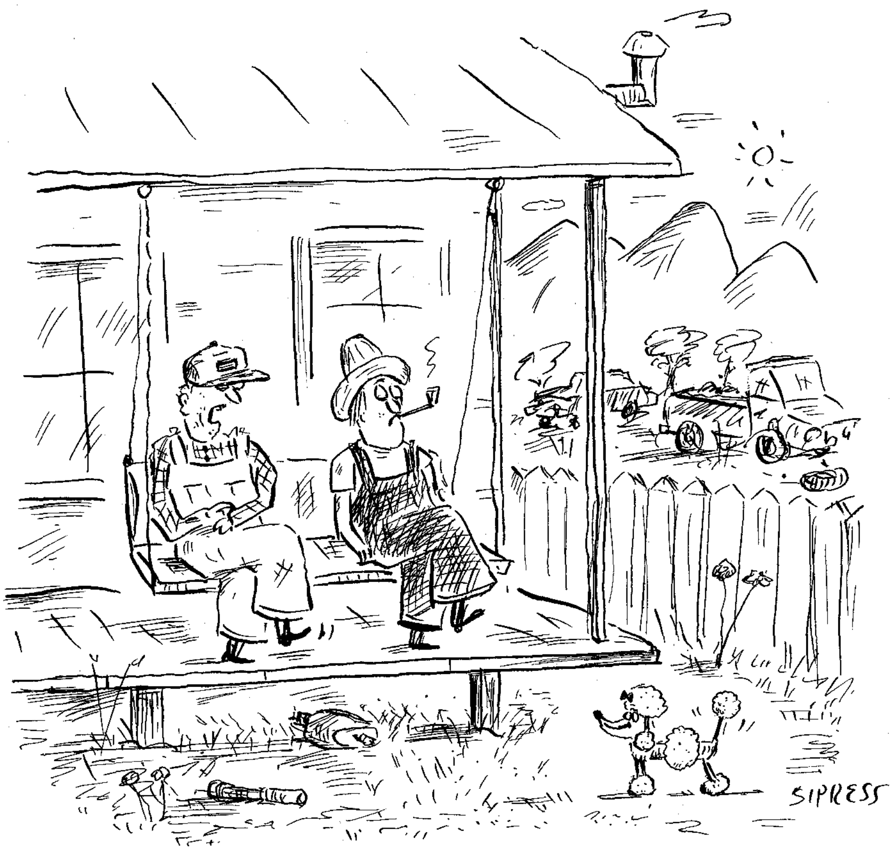
I became a freelance magazine writer. One of my first pieces, for *New York*, was about Craig Claiborne and Michael Field, who turned out to be at war over an unfavorable review Claiborne had written about the first of the Time-Life cookbook series, which Field was in charge of. In the course of reporting the article, I met Craig Claiborne, and after the article appeared he invited me to his house. What he served for dinner was not memorable, and, in any case, I don't remember it. Then Claiborne came to our house for dinner, and I served a recipe from one of his cookbooks, a Chilean seafood-and-bread casserole that was a recipe of Leonard Bernstein's wife, Felicia Montealegre. I can't believe I can come up with her name, and even how to spell it, especially given the fact that her recipe was a gluey, milky, disappointing concoction that practically bankrupted me.

I don't think it was Felicia Montealegre's fault that Craig and I never became friends, but there was no question in my mind after our two meals that he and I had no future together. Craig was a nice guy, don't get me wrong, but he was so low-key that once I'd got to know him I was almost completely unable to have even imaginary conversations with him while cooking his recipes.

Around this time, I met a man named Lee Bailey, and I guess I would have to say that if there were any embers burning in the Craig Claiborne department they were completely extinguished the moment I met Lee. Lee Bailey was a friend of my friend the gossip columnist Liz Smith, who believed that everyone she knew should be friends with everyone else she knew. So one night she invited us to Lee's house for dinner. Lee lived in the East Forties, in a floor-through below the ground, and what I distinctly remember about it was that it had some sort of straw matting on the walls that probably came from Azuma, and it was just about the most fabulous place I'd ever seen. It was simple, and easy on the eyes, and comfortable, but nothing was expensive, there was no art to speak of, and no color at all. Everything was beige. As Lee once said, "Be very careful about color."

And then dinner was served. Pork chops, grits, collard greens, and a dish of tiny baked crab apples. It was delicious. It was so straightforward and plain and honest and at the same time so playful. Those crab apples! They were adorable! The entire evening was mortifying, a revelation, a rebuke in its way to every single thing I had ever bought and every dinner I had ever served. My couch was purple. I owned a collection of brightly painted wooden Mexican animals. I had red plates and a shag rug. My menus were overwrought, overthought, and overproduced. Would Lee Bailey ever in a million years consider cooking Lee Lum's lemon chicken? Certainly not. It was clear that my life up to that point had been a mistake.

I immediately got a divorce, gave my ex-husband all the furniture, and began to make a study of Lee Bailey. I copied the theory of his menus—which always included a surprise fourth item like those



"That dawg won't hunt."

crab apples or carrot pudding or spoon bread. I bought the chairs he told me to buy and the round dining-room table that seemed to be part of the secret of why Lee's dinner parties were more fun than anyone else's. Lee put everything out on a buffet and let people help themselves; so did I. He didn't care if everything was piping hot; I threw away the Salton hot tray my mother had given me. When Lee opened a store at Henri Bendel, I purchased the white plates, seersucker napkins, and wood-handled stainless flatware that were just like his. I bought new furniture for my new apartment, and all of it was beige. I became Lee's love slave, culinarily speaking. Long before he began to write the series of cookbooks that made him well known, he had replaced all my previous imaginary friends in the kitchen, and whenever I cooked dinner and anything threatened to go wrong I could hear him telling me to calm down, it didn't matter, pour another drink, no one will care. I began to osmose from a neurotic cook with a confusing repertory of ethnic dishes to a relaxed one specializing in faintly Southern food.

You might think that having Lee as a real friend might have made it superfluous to have him as an imaginary friend, but you would be wrong. As I conducted my inner conversations with Lee—about what to serve, or what would be the perfect fourth thing to accompany what I was serving—it never occurred to me to pick up the phone and ask him. Lee was much too easygoing; he would have just laughed and said, "Anything you feel like, honey." He was, in his way, as close to a Zen master as I've ever had, and all of us who fell under his influence began with his style and eventually ended up with our own.

I always secretly wished that Lee would include one of my recipes in one of his cookbooks—he frequently came to dinner, and was always fantastically complimentary about the food—but he never asked me for any of my recipes. He did take a photograph of my back yard for one of his cookbooks, and he used my napkins and plates in the photograph; but, of course, I'd bought them at his store in Bendel's, so it didn't really count.

Meanwhile, I got married again, and divorced again. I wrote a thinly disguised novel about the end of my marriage, and it contained recipes. By then, I'd come to realize that no one was ever going to put my recipes into a book, so I'd have to do it myself. I included Lee's recipe for baked lima beans and pears (unfortunately, I left out the brown sugar, and for years people told me they'd tried cooking the recipe and it didn't work), along with my family cook Evelyn's recipe for cheesecake, which I'm fairly sure she got from the back of a Philadelphia cream-cheese package. A food expert who wrote about the book carped that the recipes were not particularly original, but it seemed to me that she had missed the point. The point wasn't about the recipes. The point (I was starting to realize) was about making people feel at home, about finding your own style, whatever it was, and committing to it. The point was about giving up neurosis where food was concerned. The point was about finding a way that food fit into your life.

And, after a while, I didn't have to have long internal dialogues with Lee—I'd incorporated what I learned from him, and I'd moved on. Lee never served salad or cheese, but I like salad and cheese. So there were more dishes to wash; so what?

And I got married again, by the way. In the course of my third marriage, I have had a series of culinary liaisons. I went through a stretch with Marcella Hazan, a brilliant cookbook author whom I could never manage to strike up an inner dialogue with; with Martha Stewart, whom I worshipped and had long, long imaginary talks with, mostly having to do with my slavish adulation of her; and, only recently, with Nigella Lawson, whose style of cooking is very similar to mine. I gave up on Nigella when one of her cupcake recipes failed in a big way, but I admire her willingness to use store-bought items in recipes, her lackadaisical qualities when it comes to how things look, and her fondness for home cooking. I especially like making her roast-beef dinner, which is very much like my mother's, except for the Yorkshire pudding. My mother didn't serve Yorkshire pudding, although there is a recipe for it on page 61 of "The Gourmet Cookbook." My mother served potato pancakes instead. I serve Yorkshire pudding *and* potato pancakes. Why not? You only live once. ♦

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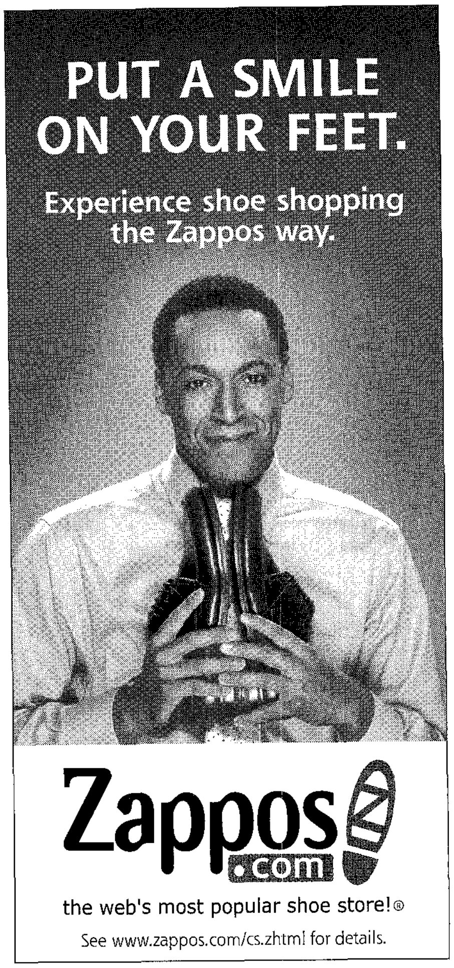
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MILLION-DOLLAR MURRAY

Why problems like homelessness may be easier to solve than to manage.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

Murray Barr was a bear of a man, an ex-marine, six feet tall and heavyset, and when he fell down—which he did nearly every day—it could take two or three grown men to pick him up. He had straight black hair and olive skin. On the street, they called him Smokey. He was missing most of his teeth. He had a wonderful smile. People loved Murray.

The homeless pose a "power law" problem: a tiny hard-core fraction accounts for most of the social costs. Photograph by Arlene Gottfried.

His chosen drink was vodka. Beer he called "horse piss." On the streets of downtown Reno, where he lived, he could buy a two-hundred-and-fifty-millilitre bottle of cheap vodka for a dollar-fifty. If he was flush, he could go for the seven-hundred-and-fifty-millilitre bottle, and if he was broke he could always do what many of the other homeless people of Reno did, which is to walk through the casinos and finish off the half-empty glasses of liquor left at the gaming tables.

"If he was on a runner, we could pick him up several times a day," Patrick O'Bryan, who is a bicycle cop in downtown Reno, said. "And he's gone on some amazing runners. He would get picked up, get detoxed, then get back out a couple of hours later and start up again. A lot of the guys on the streets who've been drinking, they get so angry. They are so incredibly abrasive, so violent, so abusive. Murray was such a character and had such a great sense of humor that we somehow got past that. Even when he was abusive, we'd say, 'Murray, you know you love us,' and he'd say, 'I know'—and go back to swearing at us."

"I've been a police officer for fifteen years," O'Bryan's partner, Steve Johns, said. "I picked up Murray my whole career. Literally."

Johns and O'Bryan pleaded with Murray to quit drinking. A few years ago, he was assigned to a treatment program in which he was under the equivalent of house arrest, and he thrived. He got a job and worked hard. But then the program ended. "Once he graduated out, he had no one to report to, and he needed that," O'Bryan said. "I don't know whether it was his military background. I suspect that it was. He was a good cook. One time, he accumulated savings of over six thousand dollars. Showed up for work religiously. Did everything he was supposed to do. They said, 'Congratulations,' and put him back on the street. He spent that six thousand in a week or so."

Often, he was too intoxicated for the drunk tank at the jail, and he'd get sent to the emergency room at either Saint

Mary's or Washoe Medical Center. Marla Johns, who was a social worker in the emergency room at Saint Mary's, saw him several times a week. "The ambulance would bring him in. We would sober him up, so he would be sober enough to go to jail. And we would call the police to pick him up. In fact, that's how I met my husband." Marla Johns is married to Steve Johns.

"He was like the one constant in an environment that was ever changing," she went on. "In he would come. He would grin that half-toothless grin. He called me 'my angel.' I would walk in the room, and he would smile and say, 'Oh, my angel, I'm so happy to see you.' We would joke back and forth, and I would beg him to quit drinking and he would laugh it off. And when time went by and he didn't come in I would get worried and call the coroner's office. When he was sober, we would find out, oh, he's working someplace, and my husband and I would go and have dinner where he was working. When my husband and I were dating, and we were going to get married, he said, 'Can I come to the wedding?' And I almost felt like he should. My joke was 'If you are sober you can come, because I can't afford your bar bill.' When we started a family, he would lay a hand on my pregnant belly and bless the child. He really was this kind of light."

In the fall of 2003, the Reno Police Department started an initiative designed to limit panhandling in the downtown core. There were articles in the newspapers, and the police department came under harsh criticism on local talk radio. The crackdown on panhandling amounted to harassment, the critics said. The homeless weren't an imposition on the city; they were just trying to get by. "One morning, I'm listening to one of the talk shows, and they're just trashing the police department and going on about how unfair it is," O'Bryan said. "And I thought, Wow, I've never seen any of these critics in one of the alleyways in the middle of the winter looking for bodies." O'Bryan was angry. In downtown Reno, food for the homeless was plentiful: there was a Gospel kitchen and Catholic Services, and even the local McDonald's fed the hungry. The panhandling was for liquor, and the liquor was anything but harmless. He and Johns spent at least half their time dealing with people like Murray; they were as much caseworkers as police officers. And they knew they weren't the only ones involved. When someone passed out on the street, there was a "One down" call to the paramedics. There were four people in an ambulance, and the patient sometimes stayed at the hospital for days, because living on the streets in a state of almost constant intoxication was a reliable way of getting sick. None of that, surely, could be cheap.

O'Bryan and Johns called someone they knew at an ambulance service and then contacted the local hospitals. "We came up with three names that were some of our chronic inebriates in the downtown area, that got arrested the most often," O'Bryan said. "We tracked those three individuals through just one of our two hospitals. One of the guys had been in jail previously, so he'd only been on the streets for six months. In those six months, he had accumulated a bill of a hundred thousand dollars—and that's at the smaller of the two hospitals near downtown Reno. It's pretty reasonable to assume that the other hospital had an even larger bill. Another individual came from Portland and had been in Reno for three months. In those three months, he had accumulated a bill for sixty-five thousand dollars. The third individual actually had some periods of being sober, and had accumulated a bill of fifty thousand."

The first of those people was Murray Barr, and Johns and O'Bryan realized that if you totted up all his hospital bills for the ten years that he had been on the streets—as well as substance-abuse-treatment costs, doctors' fees, and other expenses—Murray Barr probably ran up a medical bill as large as anyone in the state of Nevada.

"It cost us one million dollars not to do something about Murray," O'Bryan said.

Fifteen years ago, after the Rodney King beating, the Los Angeles Police Department was in crisis. It was accused of racial insensitivity and ill discipline and violence, and the assumption was that those problems had spread broadly throughout the rank and file. In the language of statisticians, it was thought that L.A.P.D.'s

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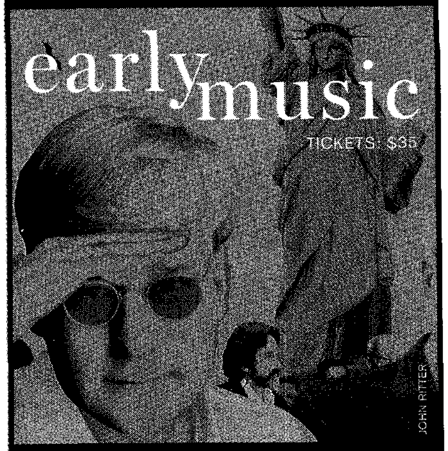

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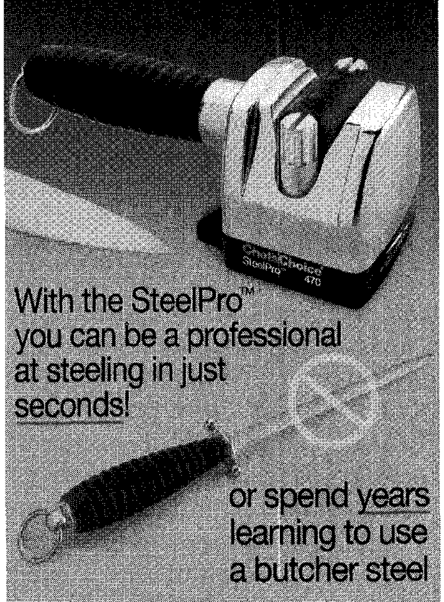

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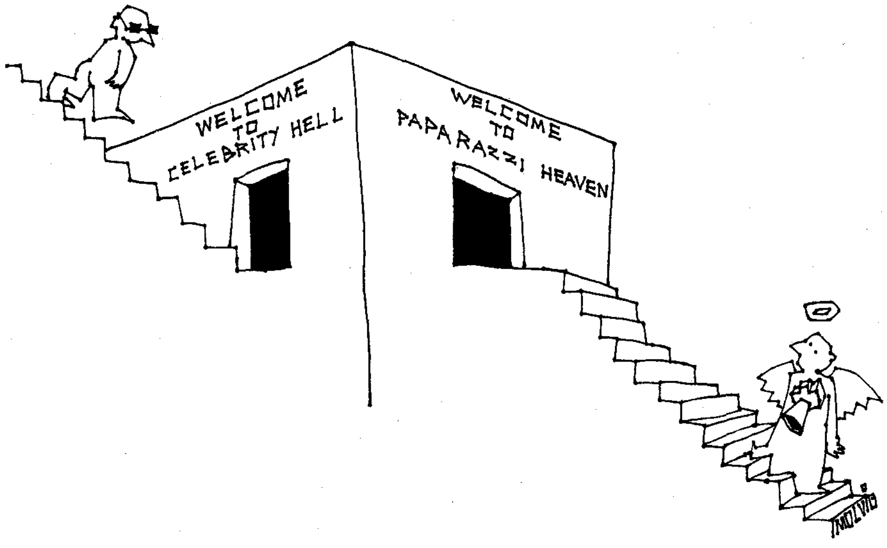

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troubles had a "normal" distribution—that if you graphed them the result would look like a bell curve, with a small number of officers at one end of the curve, a small number at the other end, and the bulk of the problem situated in the middle. The bell-curve assumption has become so much a part of our mental architecture that we tend to use it to organize experience automatically.

But when the L.A.P.D. was investigated by a special commission headed by Warren Christopher, a very different picture emerged. Between 1986 and 1990, allegations of excessive force or improper tactics were made against eighteen hundred of the eighty-five hundred officers in the L.A.P.D. The broad middle had scarcely been accused of anything. Furthermore, more than fourteen hundred officers had only one or two allegations made against them—and bear in mind that these were not proven charges, that they happened in a four-year period, and that allegations of excessive force are an inevitable feature of urban police work. (The N.Y.P.D. receives about three thousand such complaints a year.) A hundred and eighty-three officers, however, had four or more complaints against them, forty-four officers had six or more complaints, sixteen had eight or more, and one had sixteen complaints. If you were to graph the troubles of the L.A.P.D., it wouldn't look like a bell curve. It would look more like a hockey stick. It would follow what statisticians call a "power law" distribution—where all the activity is not in the middle but at one extreme.

The Christopher Commission's report repeatedly comes back to what it describes as the extreme concentration of problematic officers. One officer had been the subject of thirteen allegations of excessive use of force, five other complaints, twenty-eight "use of force reports" (that is, documented, internal accounts of inappropriate behavior), and one shooting. Another had six excessive-force complaints, nineteen other complaints, ten use-of-force reports, and three shootings. A third had twenty-seven use-of-force reports, and a fourth had thirty-five. Another had a file full of complaints for doing things like "striking an arrestee on the back of the neck with the butt of a shotgun for no apparent reason while the arrestee was kneeling and handcuffed," beating up a thirteen-year-old juvenile, and throwing an arrestee from his chair and kicking him in the back and side of the head while he was handcuffed and lying on his stomach.

The report gives the strong impression that if you fired those forty-four cops the L.A.P.D. would suddenly become a pretty well-functioning police department. But the report also suggests that the problem is tougher than it seems, because those forty-four bad cops were *so* bad that the institutional mechanisms in place to get rid of bad apples clearly weren't working. If you made the mistake of assuming that the department's troubles fell into a normal distribution, you'd propose solutions that would raise the performance of the middle—like better training or better hiring—when the middle didn't need help. For those hard-core few who did need help, meanwhile, the medicine that helped the middle wouldn't be nearly strong enough.

In the nineteen-eighties, when homelessness first surfaced as a national issue, the assumption was that the problem fit a normal distribution: that the vast majority of the homeless were in the same state of semi-permanent distress. It was an assumption that bred despair: if there were so many homeless, with so many problems, what could be done to help them? Then, fifteen years ago, a young Boston College graduate student named Dennis Culhane lived in a shelter in Philadelphia for seven weeks as part of the research for his dissertation. A few months later he went back, and was surprised to discover that he couldn't find any of the people he had recently spent so much time with. "It made me realize that most of these people were getting on with their own lives," he said.

Culhane then put together a database—the first of its kind—to track who was coming in and out of the shelter system. What he discovered profoundly changed the way homelessness is understood. Homelessness doesn't have a normal distribution, it turned out. It has a power-law distribution. "We found that eighty per cent of the homeless were in and out really quickly," he said. "In Philadelphia, the most common length of time that someone is homeless is one day. And the second most common length is two days. And they never come back. Anyone who ever has to stay in a shelter involuntarily knows that all you think about is how to make sure you never come back."

The next ten per cent were what Culhane calls episodic users. They would come for three weeks at a time, and return periodically, particularly in the winter. They were quite young, and they were often heavy drug users. It was the last ten per cent—the group at the farthest edge of the curve—that interested Culhane the most. They were the chronically homeless, who lived in the shelters, sometimes for years at a time. They were older. Many were mentally ill or physically disabled, and when we think about

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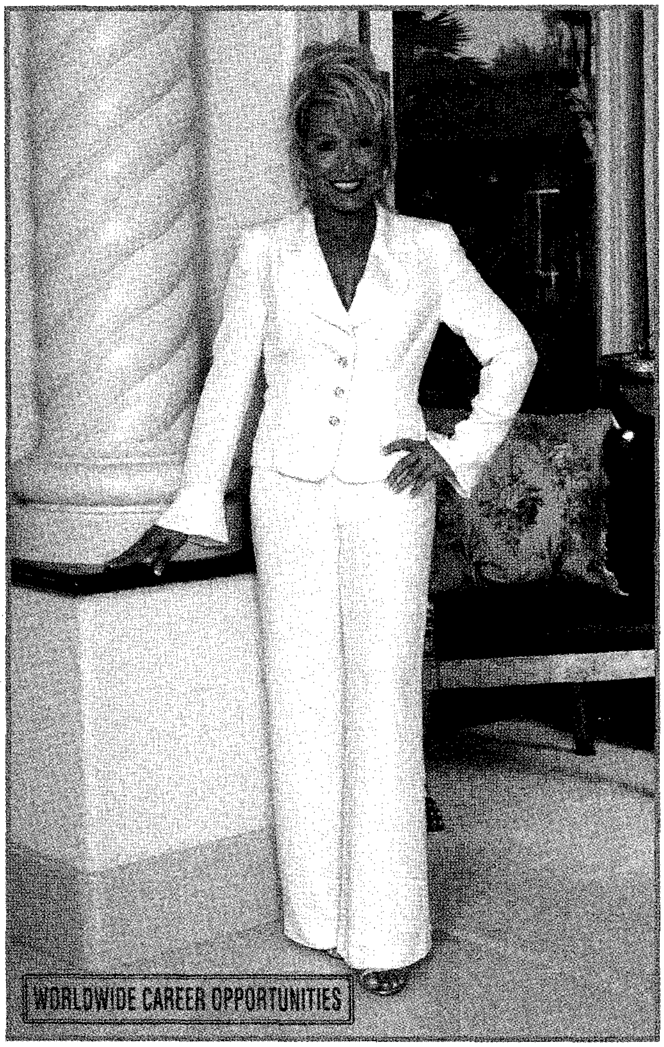

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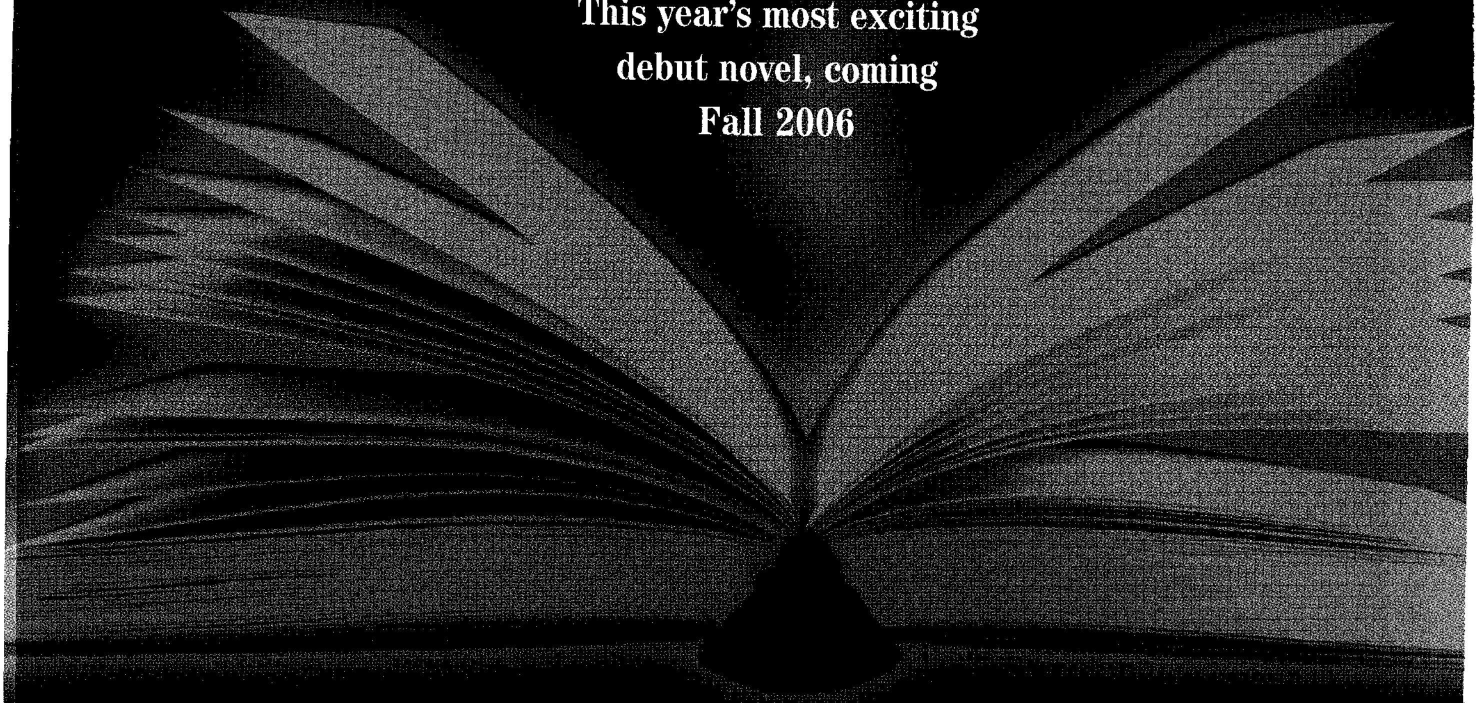

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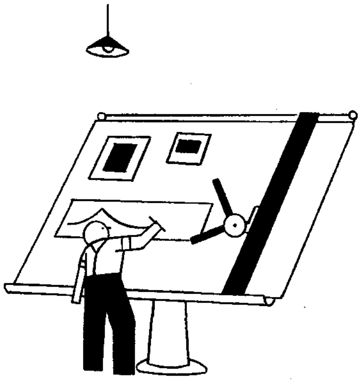
homelessness as a social problem—the people sleeping on the sidewalk, aggressively panhandling, lying drunk in doorways, huddled on subway grates and under bridges—it's this group that we have in mind. In the early nineteen-nineties, Culhane's database suggested that New York City had a quarter of a million people who were homeless at some point in the previous half decade—which was a surprisingly high number. But only about twenty-five hundred were *chronically* homeless.

It turns out, furthermore, that this group costs the health-care and social-services systems far more than anyone had ever anticipated. Culhane estimates that in New York at least sixty-two million dollars was being spent annually to shelter just those twenty-five hundred hard-core homeless. "It costs twenty-four thousand dollars a year for one of these shelter beds," Culhane said. "We're talking about a cot eighteen inches away from the next cot." Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, a leading service group for the homeless in Boston, recently tracked the medical expenses of a hundred and nineteen chronically homeless people. In the course of five years, thirty-three people died and seven more were sent to nursing homes, and the group still accounted for 18,834 emergency-room visits—at a minimum cost of a thousand dollars a visit. The University of California, San Diego Medical Center followed fifteen chronically homeless inebriates and found that over eighteen months those fifteen people were treated at the hospital's emergency room four hundred and seventeen times, and ran up bills that averaged a hundred thousand dollars each. One person—San Diego's counterpart to Murray Barr—came to the emergency room eighty-seven times.



"If it's a medical admission, it's likely to be the guys with the really complex pneumonia," James Dunford, the city of San Diego's emergency medical director and the author of the observational study, said. "They are drunk and they aspirate and get vomit in their lungs and develop a lung abscess, and they get hypothermia on top of that, because they're out in the rain. They end up in the intensive-care unit with these very complicated medical infections. These are the guys who typically get hit by cars and buses and trucks. They often have a neurosurgical catastrophe as well. So they are very prone to just falling down and cracking their head and getting a subdural hematoma, which, if not drained, could kill them, and it's the guy who falls down and hits his head who ends up costing you at least fifty thousand dollars. Meanwhile, they are going through alcoholic withdrawal and have devastating liver disease that only adds to their inability to fight infections. There is no end to the issues. We do this huge drill. We run up big lab fees, and the nurses want to quit, because they see the same guys come in over and over, and all we're doing is making them capable of walking down the block."

The homelessness problem is like the L.A.P.D.'s bad-cop problem. It's a matter of a few hard cases, and that's good news, because when a problem is that concentrated you can wrap your arms around it and think about solving it. The bad news is that those few hard cases are *hard.* They are falling-down drunks with liver disease and complex infections and mental illness. They need time and attention and lots of money. But enormous sums of money are already being spent on the chronically homeless, and Culhane saw that the kind of money it would take to solve the homeless problem could well be less than the kind of money it took to ignore it. Murray Barr used more health-care dollars, after all, than almost anyone in the state of Nevada. It would probably have been cheaper to give him a full-time nurse and his own apartment.

The leading exponent for the power-law theory of homelessness is Philip Mangano, who, since he was appointed by President Bush in 2002, has been

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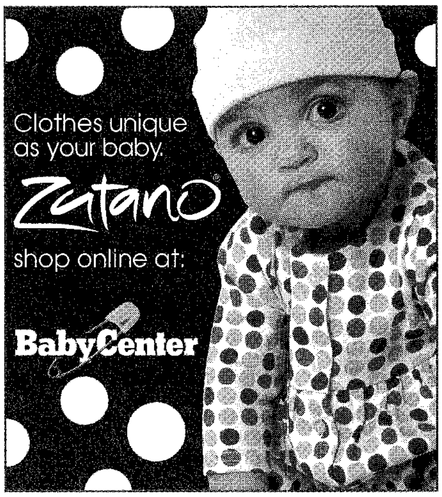

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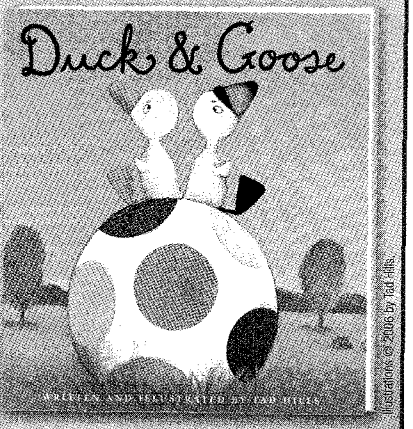
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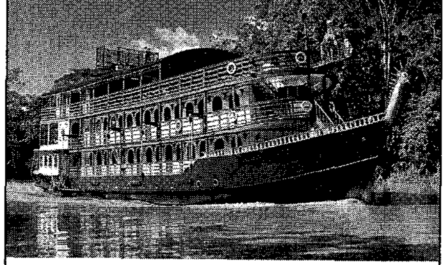

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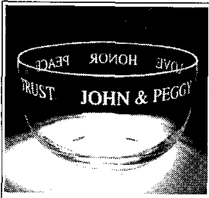

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the executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, a group that oversees the programs of twenty federal agencies. Mangano is a slender man, with a mane of white hair and a magnetic presence, who got his start as an advocate for the homeless in Massachusetts. In the past two years, he has crisscrossed the United States, educating local mayors and city councils about the real shape of the homelessness curve. Simply running soup kitchens and shelters, he argues, allows the chronically homeless to remain chronically homeless. You build a shelter and a soup kitchen if you think that homelessness is a problem with a broad and unmanageable middle. But if it's a problem at the fringe it can be solved. So far, Mangano has convinced more than two hundred cities to radically reëvaluate their policy for dealing with the homeless.

"I was in St. Louis recently," Mangano said, back in June, when he dropped by New York on his way to Boise, Idaho. "I spoke with people doing services there. They had a very difficult group of people they couldn't reach no matter what they offered. So I said, Take some of your money and rent some apartments and go out to those people, and literally go out there with the key and say to them, 'This is the key to an apartment. If you come with me right now I am going to give it to you, and you are going to have that apartment.' And so they did. And one by one those people were coming in. Our intent is to take homeless policy from the old idea of funding programs that serve homeless people endlessly and invest in results that actually end homelessness."

Mangano is a history buff, a man who sometimes falls asleep listening to old Malcolm X speeches, and who peppers his remarks with references to the civil-rights movement and the Berlin Wall and, most of all, the fight against slavery. "I am an abolitionist," he says. "My office in Boston was opposite the monument to the 54th Regiment on the Boston Common, up the street from the Park Street Church, where William Lloyd Garrison called for immediate abolition, and around the corner from where Frederick Douglass gave that famous speech at the Tremont Temple. It is very much ingrained in me that you do not manage a social wrong. You should be ending it."

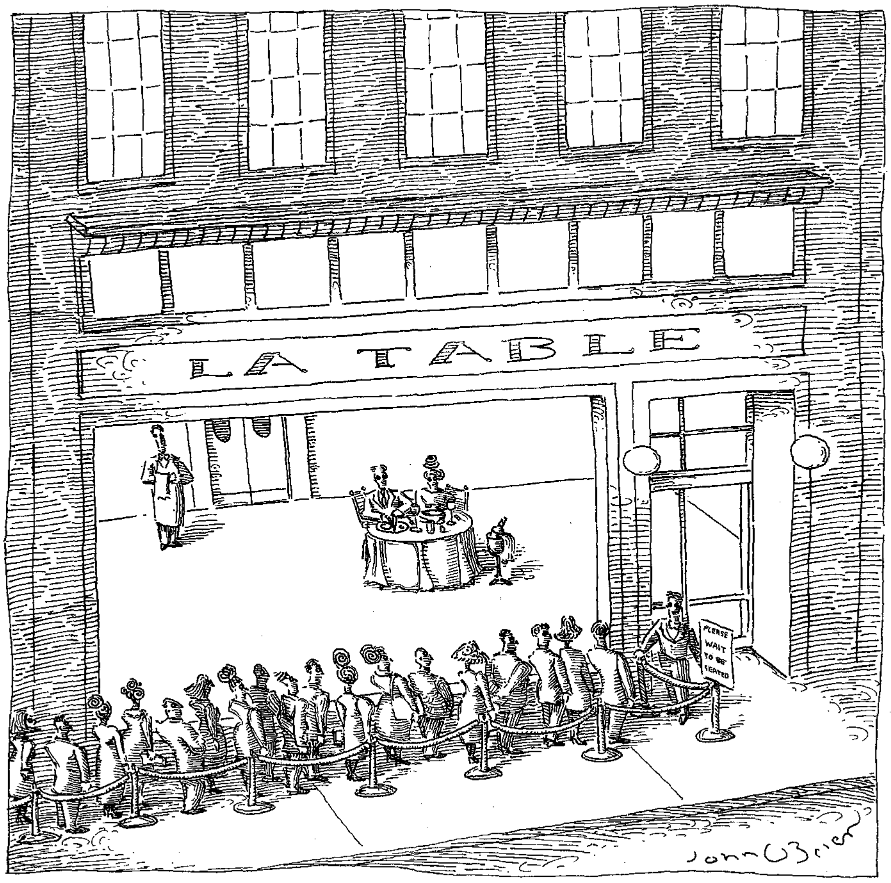
The old Y.M.C.A. in downtown Denver is on Sixteenth Street, just east of the central business district. The main building is a handsome six-story stone structure that was erected in 1906, and next door is an annex that was added in the nineteen-fifties. On the ground floor there is a gym and exercise rooms. On the upper floors there are several hundred apartments—brightly painted one-bedrooms, efficiencies, and S.R.O.-style rooms with microwaves and refrigerators and central air-conditioning—and for the past several years those apartments have been owned and managed by the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

Even by big-city standards, Denver has a serious homelessness problem. The winters are relatively mild, and the summers aren't nearly as hot as those of neighboring New Mexico or Utah, which has made the city a magnet for the indigent. By the city's estimates, it has roughly a thousand chronically homeless people, of whom three hundred spend their time downtown, along the central Sixteenth Street shopping corridor or in nearby Civic Center Park. Many of the merchants downtown worry that the presence of the homeless is scaring away customers. A few blocks north, near the hospital, a modest, low-slung detox center handles twenty-eight thousand admissions a year, many of them homeless people who have passed out on the streets, either from liquor or—as is increasingly the case—from mouthwash. "Dr. Tichenor's—Dr. Tich, they call it—is the brand of mouthwash they use," says Roxane White, the manager of the city's social services. "You can imagine what that does to your gut."

Eighteen months ago, the city signed up with Mangano. With a mixture of federal and local funds, the C.C.H. inaugurated a new program that has so far enrolled a hundred and six people. It is aimed at the Murray Barrs of Denver, the people costing the system the most. C.C.H. went after the people who had been on the streets the longest, who had a criminal record, who had a problem with substance abuse or mental illness. "We have one individual in her early sixties, but looking at her you'd think she's eighty," Rachel Post, the director of substance treatment at the C.C.H., said. (Post changed some details about her clients in order to protect their identity.) "She's a chronic alcoholic. A typical day for her is she gets up and tries to find whatever she's going to drink that day. She falls down a lot. There's another person who came in during the first week. He was on methadone maintenance. He'd had psychiatric treatment. He was incarcerated for eleven years, and lived on the streets for three years after that, and, if that's not enough, he had a hole in his heart."

The recruitment strategy was as simple as the one that Mangano had laid out in St. Louis: Would you like a free apartment? The enrollees got either an efficiency at the Y.M.C.A. or an apartment rented for them in a building somewhere else in the city, provided they agreed to work within the rules of the program. In the basement of the Y, where the racquetball courts used to be, the coalition built a command center, staffed with ten caseworkers. Five days a week, between eight-thirty and ten in the morning, the caseworkers meet and painstakingly review the status of everyone in the program. On the wall around the conference table are several large white boards, with lists of doctor's appointments and court dates and medication schedules. "We need a staffing ratio of one to ten to make it work," Post said. "You go out there and you find people and assess how they're doing in their residence. Sometimes we're in contact with someone every day. Ideally, we want to be in contact every couple of days. We've got about fifteen people we're really worried about now."

The cost of services comes to about ten thousand dollars per homeless client per year. An efficiency apartment in Denver averages $376 a month, or just over forty-five hundred a year, which means that you can house and care for a chronically homeless person for at most fifteen thousand dollars, or about a third of what he or she would cost on the street. The idea is that once the people in the program get stabilized they will find jobs, and start to pick up more and more of their own rent, which would bring someone's annual cost to the program closer to six thousand dollars. As of today, seventy-five supportive hous-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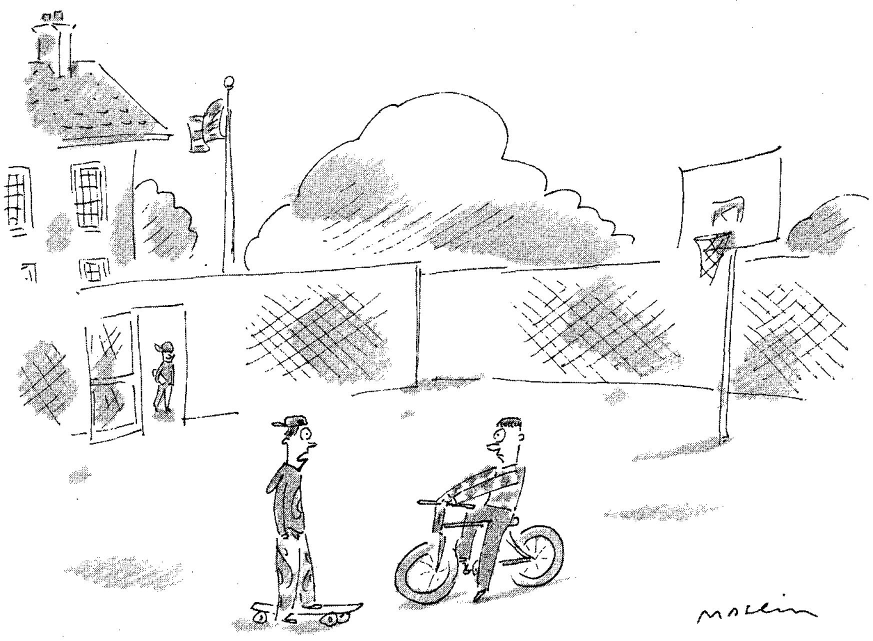


"Oh yeah? Well, my dad looted a bigger hedge fund than your dad."

• •

ing slots have already been added, and the city's homeless plan calls for eight hundred more over the next ten years.

The reality, of course, is hardly that neat and tidy. The idea that the very sickest and most troubled of the homeless can be stabilized and eventually employed is only a hope. Some of them plainly won't be able to get there: these are, after all, hard cases. "We've got one man, he's in his twenties," Post said. "Already, he has cirrhosis of the liver. One time he blew a blood alcohol of .49, which is enough to kill most people. The first place we had he brought over all his friends, and they partied and trashed the place and broke a window. Then we gave him another apartment, and he did the same thing."

Post said that the man had been sober for several months. But he could relapse at some point and perhaps trash another apartment, and they'd have to figure out what to do with him next. Post had just been on a conference call with some people in New York City who run a similar program, and they talked about whether giving clients so many chances simply encourages them to behave irresponsibly. For some people, it probably does. But what was the alternative? If this young man was put back on the streets, he would cost the system even more money. The current philosophy of welfare holds that government assistance should be temporary and conditional, to avoid creating dependency. But someone who blows .49 on a Breathalyzer and has cirrhosis of the liver at the age of twenty-seven doesn't respond to incentives and sanctions in the usual way. "The most complicated people to work with are those who have been homeless for so long that going back to the streets just isn't scary to them," Post said. "The summer comes along and they say, 'I don't need to follow your rules.' " Power-law homelessness policy has to do the opposite of normal-distribution social policy. It *should* create dependency: you want people who have been outside the system to come inside and rebuild their lives under the supervision of those ten caseworkers in the basement of the Y.M.C.A.

That is what is so perplexing about power-law homeless policy. From an economic perspective the approach makes perfect sense. But from a moral perspective it doesn't seem fair. Thousands of people in the Denver area no doubt live day to day, work two or three jobs, and are eminently deserving of a helping hand—and no one offers them the key to a new apartment. Yet that's just what the guy screaming obscenities and swigging Dr. Tich gets. When the welfare mom's time on public assistance runs out, we cut her off. Yet when the homeless man trashes his apartment we give him another. Social benefits are supposed to have some kind of moral justification. We give them to widows and disabled veterans and poor mothers with small children. Giving the homeless guy passed out on the sidewalk an apartment has a different rationale. It's simply about efficiency.

We also believe that the distribution of social benefits should not be arbitrary. We don't give only to some poor mothers, or to a random handful of disabled veterans. We give to everyone who meets a formal criterion, and the moral credibility of government assistance derives, in part, from this universality. But the Denver homelessness program doesn't help every chronically homeless person in Denver. There is a waiting list of six hundred for the supportive-housing program; it will be years before all those people get apartments, and some may never get one. There isn't enough money to go around, and to try to help everyone a little bit—to observe the principle of universality—isn't as cost-effective as helping a few people a lot. Being fair, in this case, means providing shelters and soup kitchens, and shelters and soup kitchens don't solve the problem of homelessness. Our usual moral intuitions are little use, then, when it comes to a few hard cases. Power-law problems leave us with an unpleasant choice. We can be true to our principles or we can fix the problem. We cannot do both.

A few miles northwest of the old Y.M.C.A. in downtown Denver, on the Speer Boulevard off-ramp from I-25, there is a big electronic sign by the side of the road, connected to a device that remotely measures the emissions of the vehicles driving past. When a car with properly functioning pollution-control equipment passes, the sign flashes "Good." When a car passes that is well over the acceptable limits, the sign flashes "Poor." If you stand at the Speer Boulevard exit and watch the sign for any length of time, you'll find that virtually every car scores "Good." An Audi A4—"Good." A Buick Century—"Good." A Toyota Corolla—"Good." A Ford Taurus—"Good." A Saab 9-5—"Good," and on and on, until after twenty minutes or so, some beat-up old Ford Escort or tricked-out Porsche drives by and the sign flashes "Poor." The picture of the smog problem you get from watching the Speer Boulevard sign and the picture of the homelessness problem you get from listening in on the morning staff meetings at the Y.M.C.A. are pretty much the same. Auto emissions follow a power-law distribution, and the air-pollution example offers another look at why we struggle so much with problems centered on a few hard cases.

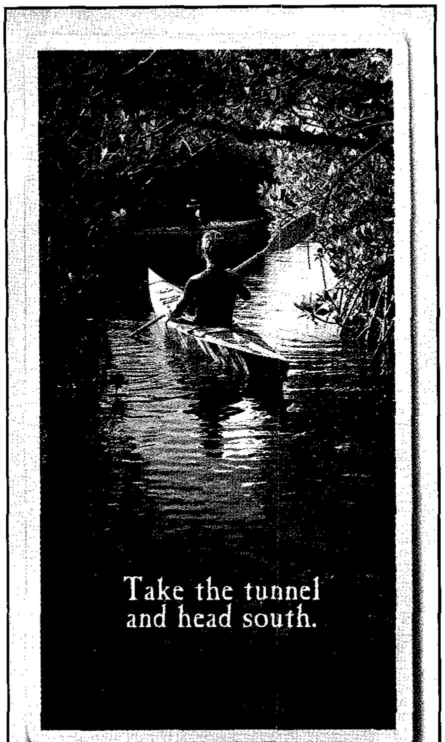
Most cars, especially new ones, are extraordinarily clean. A 2004 Subaru in good working order has an exhaust stream that's just .06 per cent carbon monoxide, which is negligible. But on almost any highway, for whatever reason—age, ill repair, deliberate tampering by the owner—a small number of cars can have carbon-monoxide levels in excess of ten per cent, which is almost two hundred times higher. In Denver, five per cent of the vehicles on the road produce fifty-five per cent of the automobile pollution.

"Let's say a car is fifteen years old," Donald Stedman says. Stedman is a chemist and automobile-emissions specialist at the University of Denver. His laboratory put up the sign on Speer Avenue. "Obviously, the older a car is the more likely it is to become broken. It's the same as human beings. And by broken we mean any number of mechanical malfunctions—the computer's not working anymore, fuel injection is stuck open, the catalyst died. It's not unusual that these failure modes result in high emissions. We have at least one car in our database which was emitting seventy grams of hydrocarbon per mile, which means that you could almost drive a Honda Civic on the exhaust fumes from that car. It's not just old cars. It's new cars with high mileage, like taxis. One of the most successful and least publicized control measures was done by a district attorney in L.A. back in the nineties. He went to LAX and discovered that all of the Bell Cabs were gross emitters. One of those cabs emitted more than its own weight of pollution every year."

In Stedman's view, the current system of smog checks makes little sense. A million motorists in Denver have to go to an emissions center every year—take time from work, wait in line, pay fifteen or twenty-five dollars—for a test that more than ninety per cent of them don't need. "Not everybody gets tested for breast cancer," Stedman says. "Not everybody takes an AIDS test." On-site smog checks, furthermore, do a pretty bad job of finding and fixing the few outliers. Car enthusiasts—with high-powered, high-polluting sports cars—have been known to drop a clean engine into their car on the day they get it tested. Others register their car in a faraway town without emissions testing or arrive at the test site "hot"—having just come off hard driving on the freeway—which is a good way to make a dirty engine appear to be clean. Still others randomly pass the test when they shouldn't, because dirty engines are highly variable and sometimes burn cleanly for short durations. There is little evidence, Stedman says, that the city's regime of inspections makes any difference in air quality.

He proposes mobile testing instead. Twenty years ago, he invented a device the size of a suitcase that uses infrared light to instantly measure and then analyze the emissions of cars as they drive by on the highway. The Speer Avenue sign is attached to one of Stedman's devices. He says that cities should put half a dozen or so of his devices in vans, park them on freeway off-ramps around the city, and have a police car poised to pull over anyone who fails the test. A half-dozen vans could test thirty thousand cars a day. For the same twenty-five million dollars that Denver's motorists now spend on on-site testing, Stedman estimates, the city could identify and fix twenty-five thousand truly dirty vehicles every year, and within a few years cut automobile emissions in the Denver metropolitan area by somewhere between thirty-five and forty per cent. The city could stop managing its smog problem and start ending it.

Why don't we all adopt the Stedman method? There's no moral impediment here. We're used to the police pulling people over for having a blown headlight or a broken side mirror, and it wouldn't be difficult to have them add pollution-control devices to their list. Yet it does run counter to an instinctive social preference for thinking of pollution as a problem to which we all contribute equally. We have developed institutions that move reassuringly quickly and forcefully on collective problems. Congress passes a law. The Environmental Protection Agency promulgates a regula-



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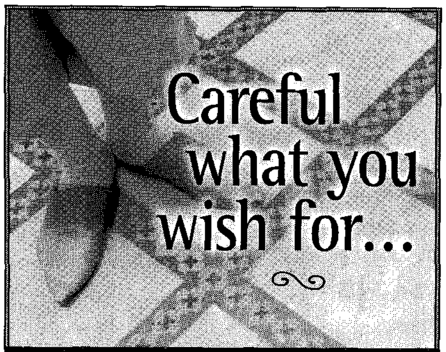

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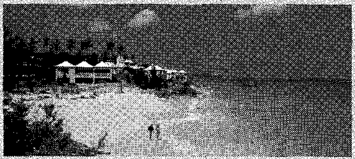

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between two clouds, moving so slowly that hours
will seem to have passed before you reach the next page

where the moon, now brighter, lowers a path
to lead you away from what you have known

into those places where what you had wished for happens,
its lone syllable like a sentence poised

at the edge of sense, waiting for you to say its name
once more as you lift your eyes from the page

and close the book, still feeling what it was like
to dwell in that light, that sudden paradise of sound.

—*Mark Strand*

tion. The auto industry makes its cars a little cleaner, and—presto—the air gets better. But Stedman doesn't much care about what happens in Washington and Detroit. The challenge of controlling air pollution isn't so much about the laws as it is about compliance with them. It's a policing problem, rather than a policy problem, and there is something ultimately unsatisfying about his proposed solution. He wants to end air pollution in Denver with a half-dozen vans outfitted with a contraption about the size of a suitcase. Can such a big problem have such a small-bore solution?

That's what made the findings of the Christopher Commission so unsatisfying. We put together blue-ribbon panels when we're faced with problems that seem too large for the normal mechanisms of bureaucratic repair. We want sweeping reforms. But what was the commission's most memorable observation? It was the story of an officer with a known history of doing things like beating up handcuffed suspects who nonetheless received a performance review from his superior stating that he "usually conducts himself in a manner that inspires respect for the law and instills public confidence." This is what you say about an officer when you haven't actually read his file, and the implication of the Christopher Commission's report was that the L.A.P.D. might help solve its problem simply by getting its police captains to read the files of their officers. The L.A.P.D.'s problem was a matter not of policy but of compliance. The department needed to adhere to the rules it already had in place, and that's not what a public hungry for institutional transformation wants to hear. Solving problems that have power-law distributions doesn't just violate our moral intuitions; it violates our political intuitions as well. It's hard not to conclude, in the end, that the reason we treated the homeless as one hopeless undifferentiated group for so long is not simply that we didn't know better. It's that we didn't want to know better. It was easier the old way.

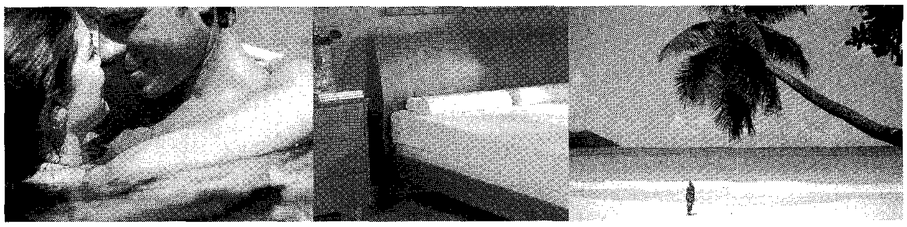
Power-law solutions have little appeal to the right, because they involve special treatment for people who do not deserve special treatment; and they have little appeal to the left, because their emphasis on efficiency over fairness suggests the cold number-crunching of Chicago-school cost-benefit analysis. Even the promise of millions of dollars in savings or cleaner air or better police departments cannot entirely compensate for such discomfort. In Denver, John Hickenlooper, the city's enormously popular mayor, has worked on the homelessness issue tirelessly during the past couple of years. He spent more time on the subject in his annual State of the City address this past summer than on any other topic. He gave the speech, with deliberate symbolism, in the city's downtown Civic Center Park, where homeless people gather every day with their shopping carts and garbage bags. He has gone on local talk radio on many occasions to discuss what the city is doing about the issue. He has commissioned studies to show what a drain on the city's resources the homeless population has become. But, he says, "there are still people who stop me going into the supermarket and say, 'I can't believe you're going to help those homeless people, those bums.' "

Early one morning a year ago, Marla Johns got a call from her husband, Steve. He was at work. "He called and woke me up," Johns remembers. "He was choked up and crying on the phone. And I thought that something had happened with another police officer. I said, 'Oh, my gosh, what happened?' He said, 'Murray died last night.' " He died of intestinal bleeding. At the police department that morning, some of the officers gave Murray a moment of silence.

"There are not many days that go by that I don't have a thought of him," she went on. "Christmas comes—and I used to buy him a Christmas present. Make sure he had warm gloves and a blanket and a coat. There was this mutual respect. There was a time when another intoxicated patient jumped off the gurney and was coming at me, and Murray jumped off his gurney and shook his fist and said, 'Don't you touch my angel.' You know, when he was monitored by the system he did fabulously. He would be on house arrest and he would get a job and he would save money and go to work every day, and he wouldn't drink. He would do all the things he was supposed to do. There are some people who can be very successful members of society if someone monitors them. Murray needed someone to be in charge of him."

But, of course, Reno didn't have a place where Murray could be given the structure he needed. Someone must have decided that it cost too much.

"I told my husband that I would claim his body if no one else did," she said. "I would not have him in an unmarked grave." ♦



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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE OPERA LOVER

How Alberto Vilar's passion for philanthropy landed him in jail.

BY JAMES B. STEWART

On the evening of May 26th last year, the financier Alberto Vilar attended an Internet conference, sponsored by Goldman Sachs, at the Bellagio Hotel and Casino, in Las Vegas. During a presentation by Meg Whitman, the chief executive of eBay, he recalled recently, his thoughts kept wandering to Austria, where he planned to see a new production of "Parsifal" in a few days. Another distraction was a Treo wireless handset, which he held discreetly under the table as he tapped out messages.

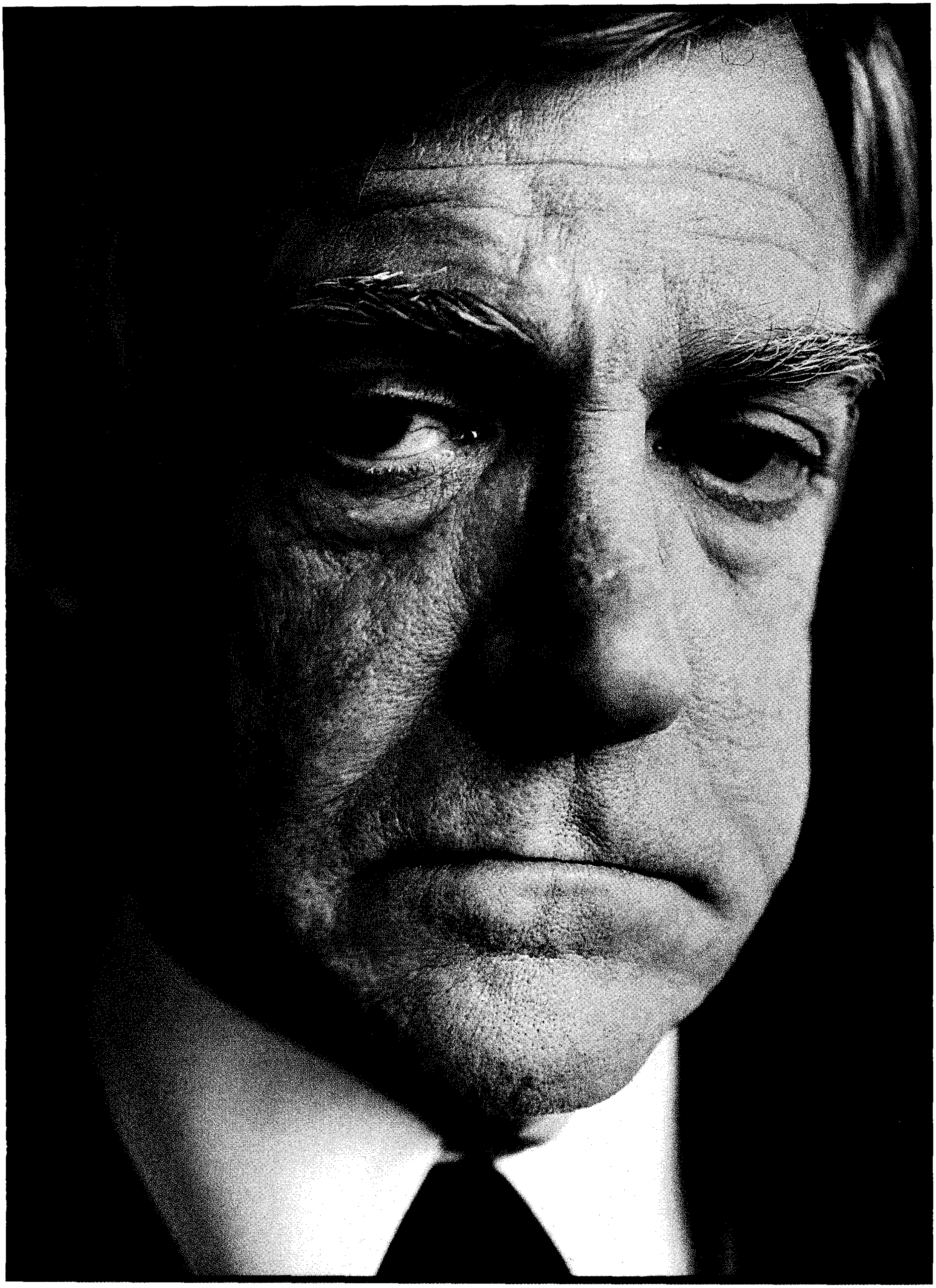
Whitman was an old business acquaintance of Vilar's, and he had been an investor in eBay since its public offering, in 1998. Such foresight, as well as an early enthusiasm for Internet stocks and the technology-led stock-market bubble of the late nineteen-nineties, had put him in the *Forbes* ranking of the four hundred wealthiest Americans. In 2000, according to the magazine's estimates, his personal fortune amounted to a billion dollars—a distinction he shared with two hundred and thirty-five other American billionaires. With his business partner, Gary Tanaka, he had created an empire that now included mutual funds, hedge funds, and other investment vehicles. His company, Amerindo, was headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in New York, London, Panama, and the Cayman Islands. Vilar lived in New York, in a large duplex apartment in U.N. Plaza, overlooking the East River. The only blight on his success had been his health; over the years, he had been hospitalized frequently for various ailments, and he had suffered back pains so severe that in 2001 he underwent a series of surgeries in an effort to relieve them.

What distinguished Vilar, even among billionaires, was his remarkable generosity and his financial support for the arts. Lavish and much-publicized gifts to the world's leading opera companies and other music institutions had made him, as he told the *Times* in 2000, "the largest supporter of classical music, opera, and ballet in the world," and according to *Forbes* the donations he made between 1996 and 1999 amounted to nearly three hundred million dollars—a largesse reminiscent of the projects of the mad King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Wagner's benefactor. In return, Vilar's name, in brass letters, adorned the Grand Tier of the Metropolitan Opera, in New York, and was etched on the menus at the Met's Alberto Vilar Grand Tier Restaurant. Vilar served on the Met's board of managing directors, whose members are each expected to donate a minimum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. (Vilar donated far more.) In 1999, after a ten-million-pound pledge, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, renamed its spacious Floral Hall the Vilar Floral Hall. At the Salzburg Festival, a full-page color portrait of Vilar appeared in all programs and at the entrances to performance venues.

The "Parsifal" production that Vilar was looking forward to was being mounted in Wels, an Austrian town whose annual Wagner festival, which accommodated only six hundred seats, had recently become a coveted ticket. Wagner was one of Vilar's favorite composers; "Parsifal" was Wagner's last opera and crowning achievement; and the title role would be sung by the Finnish Heldentenor Heikki Siukola. The Wels festival is dedicated to purist, literal stagings of Wagner—a philosophy that accorded with Vilar's own conservative taste.

Among Vilar's e-mails that evening

Vilar at his home in New York City. "Asking Alberto for money was like offering an alcoholic a drink," a friend of his said. Photograph by Steve Pyke.



"It just seems like all the good roles for women are being taken by all the good female actresses."

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were travel arrangements for the trip. He would return to New York the next day and depart for Europe. In New York, he was to have lunch with a recent graduate of the Duke University School of Medicine who had worked as an orderly at a Vail hospital where Vilar had been treated in 1997, after a skiing accident. Vilar had subsequently paid for the young man's college and medical-school education—one of about thirty students he had put through college.

The next morning, as Vilar was trying to open an e-mail during a presentation, his Treo screen went blank. When the presentation ended, he called his New York office. It was the middle of the workday, but no one answered, and the call went into voice mail. Baffled, Vilar moved up his departure to twelve o'clock, even though it meant that he would have to fly coach. Five hours later, when he stepped off the plane at Newark Liberty Airport, he was greeted by two plainclothes inspectors from the United States Postal Inspection Services. "Mr. Vilar?" one of them asked politely.

Vilar nodded.

"You're under arrest for mail fraud."

"What's that?" Vilar asked.

After being taken into custody in Manhattan, the onetime billionaire benefactor was unable to produce bail, and he remained in jail for almost four weeks. Along with Amerindo's co-founder, Gary Tanaka, he was ultimately charged with defrauding investors and embezzling five million dollars from Lily Cates, an heiress who had been one of his closest friends. (Vilar and Tanaka insist that they are innocent, and haven't stolen from or defrauded anyone.) According to the indictment, Vilar's chief motive for embezzling was to give the money away.

I first met Alberto Vilar just before Christmas, at the Madison Avenue offices of his lawyer, Jeffrey Hoffman. It was a cold morning during the transit strike, and Vilar arrived wearing a full-length fur overcoat. He looked trim, and was impeccably dressed, in a double-breasted navy-and-light-blue pin-striped suit, and I realized that I had seen him before—standing near front-row aisle seats during intermissions at the Met. "I held court there," Vilar, who is sixty-five, said. "People knew I was there, so they'd come up. Most patrons prefer something further back, but I like to see the pit and the orchestra, as well as to be as close as possible to the singers." He said that he generally took in fifty Met performances a year, and an equal number of operas elsewhere around the world. "Now it feels like I'm living in one," he said.

He initially assumed that his arrest was a misunderstanding, and recalled that his main concern was that he'd be late for his lunch with the student he had put through medical school. "I didn't panic," he said. "I have very thick skin." He attributed this to his background, and gave a dramatic account of a turbulent childhood in Cuba and subsequent setbacks: "Fifteen bombs have gone off in my life. My family lost everything. We had to flee Cuba. Then the bear market of 2000-03. For me, that was like the Second World War, Korea, and Vietnam combined. Four years ago, I was ill and close to death. They were ready to give me the last rites."

Although Vilar was cognizant of his plight, he didn't seem to recognize how serious it was, even with the combined forces of the Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission arrayed against him. People had told me that he was socially awkward, even at dinners with other operagoers at the Vilar Grand Tier Restaurant; that he was often reserved and formal, traits befitting an upper-class Hispanic upbringing. In my presence, he was relaxed and personable, with an almost gentle demeanor. At times, he seemed so detached from his tale of arrest and imprisonment that it was almost as if the events had befallen someone else.

In Vilar's telling, the postal inspectors confiscated his Treo and drove him to the central post office in Manhattan, at Eighth Avenue and Thirty-third Street. He was interviewed for forty-five minutes and then was escorted to a tiny room, about six feet by nine feet, with bars on the door. There was no window, sink, or toilet. The only furniture was a hard bench. The lights remained on constantly. "It was a cage," Vilar said. "I felt like an animal about to be shipped on a plane."

That night, he said, his mind was racing "a hundred miles an hour," and he dozed fitfully on the bench. Still, his main concern was not his business but his upcoming trip. "I didn't think about the company, which has been around for twenty-five years. But the opera in Austria—those tickets are impossible to get! I had dinners in London. Then to Paris. I had a major charity dinner to attend. This took a great deal of preparation; money had already been paid. I was going first class, in style. How could I contact all these people? What if I disappointed them?"

The next morning, Vilar was taken to the Metropolitan Correctional Center, the federal prison in lower Manhattan. His clothing was removed and he was given an orange jumpsuit. At first, he was lodged in the maximum-security wing, in a small cell with a toilet, one light bulb, a steel door, and a roommate, who lent him a copy of Ken Follett's "Eye of the Needle."

At his bail hearing, he learned that a judge, after discussions with an S.E.C. lawyer and Susan Necheles, a defense attorney arranged by Amerindo, had set bail at ten million dollars. "I didn't even have a check on me!" Vilar recalled. "Let alone ten million dollars in an account. I'd have to call Goldman Sachs, sell assets, arrange a transfer. It was impossible."

It's hard to estimate Vilar's actual net worth, because so many of his assets are private-equity stakes in startup companies that are both illiquid and difficult to value. But the appearance of great wealth, which led prosecutors to assume that Vilar had offshore accounts and other assets that they couldn't trace, was illusory. His U.N. Plaza apartment was encumbered by a twenty-three-million-dollar I.R.S. lien. His net worth was probably negative.

Efforts to raise bail initially failed. His sisters refused to pledge their homes as collateral. So did many acquaintances approached on his behalf, including the rich opera trustees whom Vilar considered his closest friends. Of the many celebrated musicians he had befriended, only Valery Gergiev, of the Mariinsky Theatre, in St. Petersburg, home to the Kirov Opera, responded, contributing five hundred thousand dollars in cash. Gergiev's manager issued a statement that said, "Valery believes in people who help and who are friends." (Vilar had pledged fourteen million dollars to the Kirov in 2000 and paid a million dollars toward a Gergiev-led production of "War and Peace.")

The government eventually accepted as collateral four million dollars, in the form of cash and the pledge of a house, put up by friends, as well as promises to pay an additional six million if Vilar fled. With bail secured, Necheles resigned as his lawyer, saying that Vilar hadn't paid her fees. To replace her, he hired Hoffman, a criminal lawyer whose clients had included Gene Gotti, John Gotti's brother.

On June 23rd, Vilar was finally released, but he remains under house arrest in his apartment. Vilar scoffs at the notion that he is a flight risk. "Where would I go?" he asked me. "They took my passport." He wears an ankle bracelet, and his activities are monitored by a federal officer. He can make trips to church, to his lawyer, and to his doctor, and one day a week is allowed three hours for shopping. Vilar said that he has adapted. He is an avid reader, enjoys the classical music at St. Thomas Church, on Fifth Avenue, which he now attends regularly, and has begun taking piano lessons at home.

"Of everything I've lived through—my arrest, the Cuban revolution, my illness and surgery, the bear market—this has been the worst," he said. "I was completely abandoned. Not a word from Salzburg. Nothing from the Royal Opera House.

"But the Met is the biggest loss. I was on the Met's board for years. I was on the executive committee. I paid for the young artists. When the Met went to Europe, I accompanied them. I paid for the titles on the seat backs. In the Met's one-hundred-plus-year history, it has had only two great donors: Sybil Harrington and me." Harrington, the widow of an Amarillo, Texas, oilman, gave donations totalling more than thirty million dollars. She once said, "Giving money away is hard work. But I got a kick out of it. I felt important for once in my life."

Vilar went on, "The board members loved music so much that we loved each other. I adored the Met." He paused, struggling to collect himself. "No Met board member has spoken to me," he said. "Not one. I would have been so happy for even a midnight message: 'We wish you the best.' "

Johanna Fiedler, the author of a lively 2001 history of the Metropolitan Opera, "Molto Agitato," wrote that "Vilar's father had owned a sugar plantation in Cuba, and the family had fled the Cuban Revolution as penniless refugees." Vilar's Cuban upbringing, a strained relationship with his father, who died in 1988, and the story of his life in Havana were among the first topics that he brought up when we met. As Vilar told it, his father was a high-ranking Cuban sugar-company executive, and he and his family lived in affluent surroundings in Havana until his father was transferred to Puerto Rico. He said that his interest in music was kindled at an early age by his Cuban grandmother, a conservatory student who loved classical music, played Mario Lanza recordings for him, and essentially reared him and his two sisters after his father and mother were divorced. Vilar said he believed that the deep-rooted clash between his macho father and the sensitive, intellectual, and artistic son did much to forge his personality. "Cuba is a Spanish, Catholic country. Boys are supposed to be interested in sports, chasing girls, and drinking. I asked for violin lessons. My father said, 'Cuban men don't play the violin.' So I asked him, 'Why are all the players in the orchestra men?' His idea of music was Frank Sinatra. Classical music was for 'longhairs.' " Vilar was religious, an altar boy; his father was anti-Catholic and agnostic. Vilar showed little or no interest in sports or girls; his father wanted him to play soccer, marry, and go into the sugar business. "I hated sports. I locked myself in and read books and listened to classical music."

After the Castro revolution, Vilar said, his family lost everything. He was attending Washington & Jefferson College, in Pennsylvania, and had to borrow money to pay his tuition. He graduated with a degree in economics and spent two years in the Army before taking an entry-level job with Citibank's international division. While awaiting a counterrevolution that would overturn the Castro regime and allow him to "reclaim," as he put it, the family sugar business in Cuba, he moved through various jobs on Wall Street. In 1979, he founded Amerindo with Gary Tanaka, who had studied economics at M.I.T. and earned a doctorate at London University's Imperial College. Initially, both Vilar and Tanaka lived in London, the home of some of their early investors. Tanaka, who was born in a Japanese internment camp in Idaho during the Second World War, preferred London to the U.S. As Vilar described their relationship, he was the outgoing visionary and the strategist who attracted clients, while the more introverted, cerebral Tanaka executed trades and tended the back-office operations.

Vilar describes himself as a perpetual student, and in the early eighties he developed an interest in electronics. "I studied pure mathematics, engineering, and physics," he said. "I got an M.B.A."—from Iona College, in New Rochelle, New York, in 1970—"and then turned to molecular biology. I know more about genetics than ninety-five per cent of all medical doctors." The bull market was just beginning, and it took time to translate this into big stock-market gains, but, Vilar boasted, he was one of the earliest investors in Microsoft and Cisco. "Cisco was my biggest home run," he recalled. "It went up three-hundred-fold." *Fortune* reported in 1999 that Amerindo Investment Advisors, the money-management arm of his company, had generated annual returns of nearly twenty-eight per cent since 1979, compared with less than nineteen per cent for the S. & P. 500. Vilar's most spectacular returns came in the technology-led boom of the late nineteen-nineties, when he bet heavily on everything connected to the Internet. In 1996, he launched an Amerindo technology mutual fund; in 1999, its biggest holdings were Yahoo!, Amazon, eBay, Ariba, and Critical Path. The fund gained eighty-five per cent in 1998 and two hundred and fifty per cent in 1999.

"Everyone needs nice things to get sick of."

As his wealth accumulated, Vilar indulged his fondness for skiing, buying a nine-thousand-square-foot lodge in Beaver Creek, Colorado, in 1991. He bought the U.N. Plaza apartment in 1992, and added an adjacent apartment two years later, developing plans to transform it into a concert venue with kitchen and dining facilities. Three crystal chandeliers modelled on those at the Met were hung in the apartment, and craftsmen spent two years transforming one wall into a replica of a wall at the Mozarteum, the venerable concert hall in Salzburg.

Vilar said that he had not planned to become a philanthropist. "I'm a born giver," he told me. "I'm just naturally generous. Even in college, I gave money away and lent it to my friends, at least until we lost everything." His earliest gifts were to young people, to finance their educations. In the mid-nineteen-eighties, he became a patron of the Met, for a relatively modest fifteen hundred dollars. By the early nineties, he was giving thirty-five thousand dollars a year. This attracted the attention of the Met's patron office. He quickly became the charge of Marilyn Shapiro, at that time the Met's head of development, who in 1980 had landed the Sybil Harrington endowment.

After Shapiro arranged several dinners for Vilar in the Met's Grand Tier restaurant, followed by performances during which he sat in the manager's box (just left of the center box at the parterre level), Vilar increased his gift to a hundred thousand dollars, thereby qualifying for the perquisites of the "Golden Horseshoe," including a choice of the best seats. Next, Shapiro asked him to finance the Met's young-artist development program, with a donation of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. He readily agreed, especially since it gave him early access to potential stars who might later feel indebted to him. He was particularly excited about the Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli, whose career he'd followed avidly since first hearing her in Europe, in the early nineties. When Shapiro suggested that, for two million dollars, he might underwrite Bartoli's Met début, in 1996, in a new production of "Così

Fan Tutte," Vilar agreed. He then paid for another production for Bartoli, "La Cenerentola."

"I wrote a check," Vilar recalled. "I was nervous. I'd gone from three thousand dollars to two million dollars in just a few years. I did this from the bottom of my heart. I loved the house and I loved the singer. I never interfered. Not like Mrs. Harrington, who I heard picked the color of the drapes. 'Cenerentola' is a B-minus opera. I didn't care. I bought the whole package. I wanted to underwrite Cecilia's performance."

"Let the healing begin."

The production was a critical success, but Vilar was disappointed. "What did you see when you opened the program? A big picture of Joe Volpe and James Levine," he said. (Joseph Volpe was the Met's general manager and Levine was the artistic director.) "Even people who changed a light bulb got their names in the program. But you needed a microscope to see my name. At the bottom of a cramped page, in tiny letters, it said, 'The Metropolitan Opera thanks Alberto Vilar for this wonderful production.' You couldn't even read it. It was disrespectful."

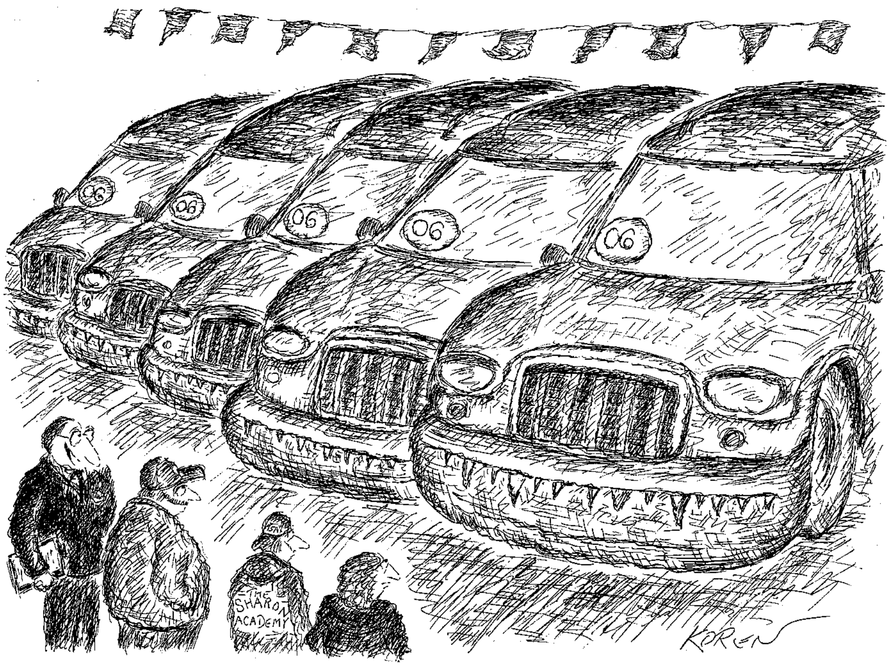
Vilar stressed to me that it was a matter of pragmatism, not vanity. "If you want people to give, you have to offer recognition. You can count on one hand the number of people willing to write a check for two million dollars to underwrite a new opera. It's a myth that there are all these 'anonymous' donors. There aren't any."

In 1996, Shapiro proposed to the Met's board that Vilar be considered as a trustee, and Volpe invited him to lunch to discuss the possibility of his underwriting additional new productions. Volpe had begun his career at the Met as a stagehand and worked his way up to the post of general manager in 1990. In contrast to the pedigreed backgrounds of many trustees, and the urbanity of the development staff, he was down to earth, and still bore traces of his less-exalted background. Vilar's recounting of his life and recent financial success and his alluding to friendships with figures like Prince Charles not only failed to charm Volpe but made a negative impression. ("Volpe never liked me, but his wife, Jean, adored me," Vilar said.) Nevertheless, Vilar decided to fund three more new productions: "La Traviata," to be directed by Franco Zeffirelli, a Vilar favorite; "The Marriage of Figaro," as another vehicle for Bartoli; and "Fidelio"; each production would cost two million dollars. He also increased his annual contribution, to three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Soon afterward, Vilar was given a seat as a managing director on the Met's board.

Since the Metropolitan Opera's opening, in 1883, when it quickly eclipsed the Academy of Music as New York's leading house, it has been a symbol of wealth and social prominence. As detailed in Fiedler's "Molto Agitato," Mrs. William Astor typically arrived late, held court in her box during intermission, then left early to preside over ten-course dinners at her Fifth Avenue mansion. Others dared not depart before she vacated her box. The original boards were studded with names from the Gilded Age: Whitney, Vanderbilt, Roosevelt, better known for their business acumen than for their love of music. Today, its board members enjoy a status rivalled only by those of the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.

The Met's current board chairman, Christine Hunter, is an heiress who controls the Gramma Fisher Foundation, of Marshalltown, Iowa, which has frequently funded new Met productions. Mercedes Bass, the wife of the Fort Worth oil billionaire Sid R. Bass, is also a member. James Kinnear, a former president and C.E.O. of Texaco, is the honorary chairman, and William Morris, a Wall Street investor, is the president.

Managing directors like to say that the board embodies the Met's values and aspirations, and that exceeding care is taken with the choice of new members. Yet even a cursory glance at the Met's budget reveals that the management and the board have left the institution precariously dependent on annual gifts, making it, in a sense, hostage to large donors. Even though top ticket prices exceed three hundred dollars, ticket sales cover less than half the Met's costs. Its annual budget is approximately two hundred million dollars, about the same as the Metropolitan Museum's; but its endowment is around three hundred million, while the museum's is more than two billion. This



"We breed them for aggressiveness."

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year, the Met will have an operating deficit of $4.3 million.

Although board nominees are usually required to apprentice, sometimes for years, as "advisory" trustees, Vilar was promoted immediately to the managing-director level. A development officer who was there at the time Vilar was vetted told me, in regard to a background check, "We provided what was in the public record, and of course he was a known commodity, having given three productions."

Vilar was formally named to the board in May, 1996. He joined the investment committee, which manages the Met's endowment, and—at the behest of the chairman at the time, James Kinnear—the executive committee, where much of the governing power resides. Not coincidentally, the Met was beginning a multiyear capital campaign to shore up its endowment. Kinnear approached Vilar to be the campaign's lead donor, someone who would get the campaign off to an impressive start and serve as both an example and an incentive for other donors. Vilar responded with a pledge of twenty million dollars.

This time, Vilar insisted upon recognition: the rechristened Alberto Vilar Grand Tier; the renaming of the restaurant, with menus bearing his name; and his name displayed prominently in the elevators—a measure that the Met opposed until Vilar's lawyers intervened. He also wanted his photograph in the program and his name in larger type, suggestions that Volpe resisted. "Volpe told me there weren't any pictures in the program, and I said, 'Excuse me, what about yours?' I had to take this to the executive committee," Vilar recalled. Vilar never got the picture, but he did get the bigger type and more prominent display.

Unknown to Vilar, Volpe had grown suspicious of his claims and resentful of his demands. When Volpe and Vilar attended a reception at Covent Garden, Prince Charles passed by Vilar without greeting him, casting doubt on the close friendship that Vilar had claimed. Volpe was also skeptical of the lavish pledge. Under an arrangement that Vilar had negotiated with Kinnear, he would make payments of three million dollars a year for five years into an account that he would establish for the Met at Amerindo. Vilar would continue to control and invest the funds, and promised that in five years the account would grow to twenty million dollars, and in all likelihood it would be far more; if not, Vilar would make up any difference.

Volpe's concerns were brushed aside by Kinnear, who, eager to secure the pledge, gave in to nearly all Vilar's demands. The pledge was formalized in a written document. "Kinnear was much easier to deal with," Vilar said.

As the technology-driven bull market neared its peak in the following two years, bringing Amerindo's coffers to nine billion dollars, Vilar's and Tanaka's personal wealth surged. Tanaka acquired a stable of racehorses and, following Vilar's philanthropic lead, in 2000 gave twenty-five million pounds to Imperial College—the largest donation in the school's ninety-three-year history—to endow the Tanaka School of Business. Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of York attended the school's opening ceremony. Vilar's gifts also multiplied, and he hired two full-time assistants and an outside consultant to monitor them. To his friend Valery Gergiev and the Kirov Opera, he pledged fourteen million dollars; to Plácido Domingo, the director of the Los Angeles Opera, he promised ten million dollars; to the Royal Opera House, he pledged ten million pounds, as well as four and a half million pounds for the young-artist development program.

Vilar told me that he doesn't know how much he finally donated or pledged, since the government took all his records, but he guessed that the total is about two hundred million dollars. "All I know is I gave away ninety per cent of everything I drew down," he said.

Vilar's new visibility, social prominence, seemingly inexhaustible wealth, and, of course, his status as a single man made him attractive to women. Vilar described himself to me several times as a "lifelong bachelor," but he has been married twice. His first marriage, to a woman he will not identify, occurred in the sixties, and did not last long. When I asked him about his second marriage, to Maria Dichov, he brushed it aside as "short-lived," and said that it "didn't work out."

In reality, I subsequently learned, the marriage lasted more than ten years, though the two were often apart. They met in San Francisco, in 1984, and were married not long after, at the Episcopal Grace Cathedral, on Nob Hill, in a ceremony orchestrated by Vilar. (After his divorce, it would have been difficult for him to remarry in a Roman Catholic ceremony.) The couple lived in London and New York, but Vilar steadily distanced himself from his wife. Though they shared a love of opera—Dichov had previously been involved with an aspiring tenor—and often attended Covent Garden and the Met, Vilar told friends that she was unsophisticated and that he had to teach her about the art form. After Vilar's name was listed in the Met program as a donor, Dichov was hurt that the listing didn't read "Mr. and Mrs. Alberto Vilar," like those of other married couples. They separated in 1990, and, after a protracted divorce, Vilar insisted that she revert to the use of her maiden name. Still, they remained friends. Vilar paid the mortgages on Dichov's San Francisco and London apartments, and in 2001 he took her and her mother to the Bayreuth Festival, where they dined with Wolfgang Wagner, fulfilling a lifelong dream of Dichov's mother.

Even before the divorce, Vilar was often accompanied to events by a succession of women who, to varying degrees, were perceived as girlfriends, or even as prospective wives. Indeed, Vilar referred to some as S.M.C.s, which stood for "serious marriage candidates." Generally speaking, these weren't society figures or glamorous models but attractive, understated women content to let Vilar be the center of attention.

An exception to the pattern was the soprano Renée Fleming, with whom he attended various music and social events. Vilar told me that they dated briefly, adding that she is a "nice, lovely person," but he said that it never progressed much beyond his being a "groupie," and that as a rule he didn't try to date the many opera stars whom he met.

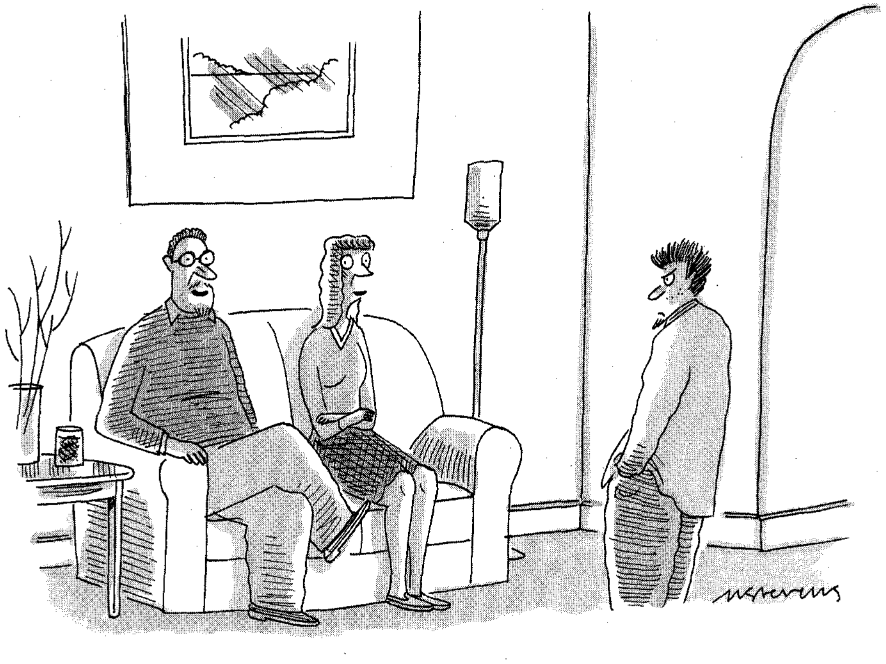
Vilar told me that his romantic life was much exaggerated. "I never had girlfriends lined up," he said. "I wasn't chasing women. I went to so many performances and galas, where most of the women I met were older or in couples. My hobby, which was to sit in a concert hall a hundred times a year, was something I was perfectly comfortable doing alone. I was a shy, shy, shy boy with girls. My father's worst fear was that I'd become a priest."

Sometimes, though, the lines between personal and professional relationships blurred. One companion, whom Vilar dated intermittently for six years, was Dana Smith, a woman twenty years younger, who worked at Amerindo in various capacities, including chief compliance officer. In 2000, she quit the firm, but they continued to see each other; at the time of his arrest, she was asked to serve as interim president of the company. Another close friend, though not a romantic interest, was Lily Cates, the mother of the actress Phoebe Cates. She had often counselled Vilar on his romances and friendships with women. Her first husband, Joseph Cates, had produced "The $64,000 Question," in the nineteen-fifties. In 1999, she married Marshall Naify, a theatre-chain entrepreneur and horse breeder, and Vilar gave her away at the wedding. When Naify died, the following year, she inherited a portion of his considerable estate, which totalled, according to *Forbes*, $1.7 billion. Cates was also a prominent investor in Amerindo. Vilar told the S.E.C. last year that, under his supervision, Cates's initial investment, of $1.7 million, in 1987, had soared to above ten million, along with an additional six million in "distributions" over the years.

As the number of his friends and acquaintances in the opera world expanded, and news of his Met gift spread, he became the most sought-after donor in the world of music. In the eyes of several people close to him, Vilar was oblivious of the possibility that he was being pursued for his money rather than for his musical taste or personal popularity. Edgar Vincent, Plácido Domingo's longtime manager, told me, "My whole feeling is that this man was insecure and wanted to have the love and respect of as many people as possible. You're never fêted as much for the second ten million as you are for the first. Therefore he was constantly thinking of new donations, new pledges. He spread himself so thin. He needed the adulation."

On October 4, 2000, Vilar turned sixty. Dana Smith and his closest friend, James McMurtry, a retired neurosurgeon and an avid operagoer, gave a surprise birthday party for him and two hundred and fifty well-wishers at the Union Club, on East Sixty-ninth Street, where McMurtry is a member. Plácido Domingo, the baritone Dwayne Croft, and a Spanish zarzuela group sang, and James Levine played the piano. A filmed tribute included appearances by Gergiev, Fleming, and the former opera star Beverly Sills. Vilar looks back on it now as the high point of his life.

On March 10, 2000, when the Nasdaq composite index topped out at 5132.52, Amerindo had more than nine billion dollars under management. Now the Nasdaq suffered the worst



"Yes, but Mummy and Daddy are on legal drugs."

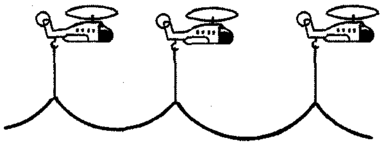
bear market in its history, eclipsing even the decline of the Dow Jones average during the Great Depression. In the summer of 2000, it dropped, then seemed to stabilize; then it plunged, exacerbated by a recession that began early the next year. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, sent global markets into a tailspin. By the time the Nasdaq hit bottom, on August 9, 2002, it had fallen ninety per cent from its peak.

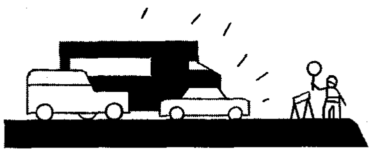
Vilar told me that he had anticipated a decline of around "thirty to fifty per cent" in technology stocks, and said that he warned the Metropolitan Opera's investment committee that the endowment should raise cash. (Others on the committee dispute this, saying that Vilar wanted to increase the Met's exposure to volatile technology stocks.) But the committee rejected his warning, Vilar said, voting to retain its equity exposure, and he resigned. "Only two people on the committee were investment professionals—the rest were socialites," Vilar told me. "I felt the committee was a rubber stamp. The Met was spending the endowment recklessly—more than seven per cent each year. I was appalled." Among other complaints, he felt that too little time was given to debate the decisions of the ruling few, consisting of the chairman, first James Kinnear and then Beverly Sills; the president, Bruce Crawford; and Volpe, the general manager. When Crawford retired, in 1999, he essentially "anointed his own successors," Vilar said—Paul Montrone, the chairman of Fisher Scientific, and then William Morris, the Wall Street investor, with whom Vilar had clashed on the investment committee. The decisions were made without informing Vilar. "It was imperial overreach," Vilar said. "I was annoyed. When I complained, I was rebuffed in two seconds in a very haughty tone."

Despite his supposed warnings at the Met and elsewhere about an impending stock-market correction, Vilar conceded to me that he had failed to follow his own advice at Amerindo. Unshaken in his conviction that technology stocks were the future, Vilar had launched a new B2B (business-to-business) Internet fund in the spring of 2000. According to Amerindo's S.E.C. disclosures that October, Ariba was the largest holding of the Amerindo technology fund; eBay, Inktomi, I2 Technologies, Commerce One, and Juniper Networks were prominent in the B2B fund. All these companies plunged from their peak values. "We didn't execute the way we should have," Vilar told me, in part because he was suffering increasing back pain, and visits to doctors and hospitals distracted him. Vilar was recuperating from back surgery at Columbia University Medical Center when terrorists struck the World Trade Center.

Others working at Amerindo at the time dispute his account. While acknowledging his medical problems, they said that, beginning in 2000, he was largely an absentee manager, calling from St. Petersburg or Vienna with vague strategic ideas that he left to others at the firm to implement. When *Forbes* sought his overview of the technology sector and five stock picks, he had others at the office do the research and make the selections. "The place was on autopilot," one executive there told me. "He was at opera or music events constantly. He'd set over-all policy and then say, 'You figure this out.' " Vilar maintained that he spent no more than fifteen per cent of the workday on philanthropy, even while travelling, and that his concertgoing and operagoing were confined to evening hours.

The market collapse was as hard on Vilar's personal fortune as it was on his firm and its clients. Remarkably, Vilar appears never to have separated his own finances from those of the firm; apart from real estate and personal property, virtually all his net worth was invested in Amerindo. He told me that he never really knew his own net worth, even at its peak, and that whenever he needed money for charitable contributions or other expenditures he simply asked Tanaka, and funds were deposited into his personal account.



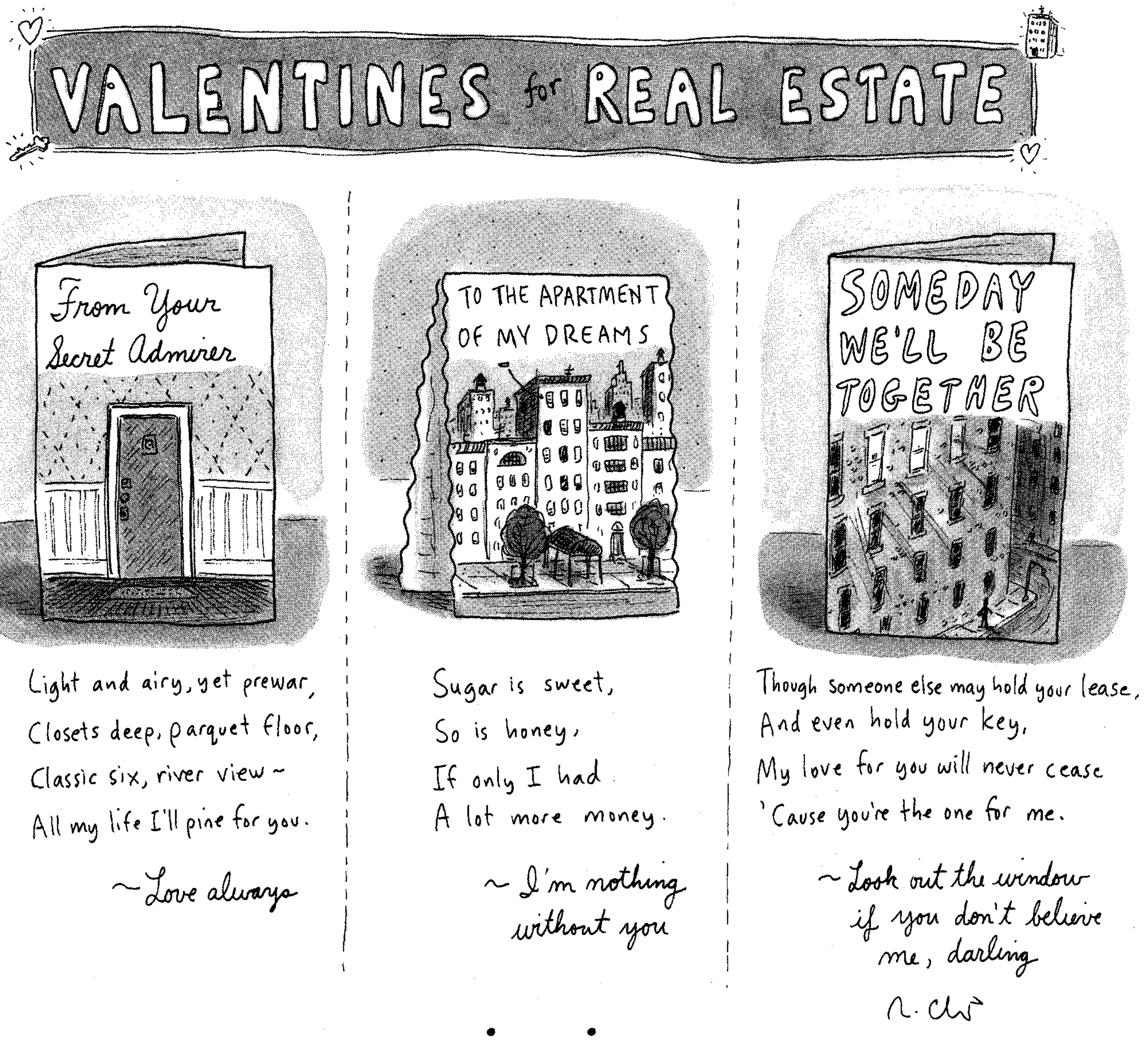


Even as the markets declined, Vilar's requests for cash were fulfilled, and he bought another home in Beaver Creek—at sixteen thousand square feet, the largest ever built in the affluent community. In December, 2001, after an opening-night performance at La Scala, a close friend, the manager of the Cartier branch in Milan, insisted that he visit the store to see a seven-carat square-cut diamond ring that Cartier had acquired. "It was the most beautiful ring I ever saw," Vilar said. Though he had no immediate plans for it, he bought the ring and put it in the vault in his Manhattan apartment. Vilar declined to tell me what he paid for it, but he told a friend that the price was half a million dollars.

He also undertook a public-relations offensive to bolster his reputation as a financial genius. One of his goals was to land a place on the Forbes 400 list. While compiling the list for 2001, *Forbes* researchers called Vilar, and he concurred with the magazine's estimate of his net worth at a billion dollars. He finally made his début on that year's list, at No. 236. The following year, *Forbes* researchers called again, wondering if, in light of Vilar's gifts and the decline in the markets, his net worth had diminished, and, if so, by how much.

According to an Amerindo employee, Vilar said, "I'll handle this. This is very important. I have to be on the list. I belong on the list. If Ariba goes up two or three times, I'll be a billionaire five times over!" (Ariba's shares have dropped from more than two hundred dollars at the beginning of 2001 to less than ten dollars today.) Vilar remained on the list through 2004, though the estimate of his net worth was given as nine hundred and fifty million dollars.

Vilar enjoyed media attention and glowing profiles: in *Fortune*, the *Financial Times*, and the *Times;* his photograph on the covers of *Barron's*, the magazine *Hispanic*, and *Worth*, which, in November, 2000, as Amerindo was heading toward a fifty-per-cent decline, ran a glossy nine-page spread and de-


VALENTINES for REAL ESTATE
From Your Secret Admirer
Light and airy, yet prewar,
Closets deep, parquet floor,
Classic six, river view ~
All my life I'll pine for you.
~ Love always
TO THE APARTMENT OF MY DREAMS
Sugar is sweet,
So is honey,
If only I had
A lot more money.
~ I'm nothing without you
SOMEDAY WE'LL BE TOGETHER
Though someone else may hold your lease,
And even hold your key,
My love for you will never cease
'Cause you're the one for me.
~ Look out the window if you don't believe me, darling

scribed him as "a pitch-perfect stock picker who knows which start-ups are golden and which operas are grand."

In September, 2000, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills, Vilar had staged a press conference with Plácido Domingo and Valery Gergiev to announce a series of new operas that would be produced jointly by the Los Angeles Opera and the Kirov. The planned gift from Vilar was fourteen million dollars; to the dismay of his philanthropic advisers, after a phone call from Gergiev the number jumped to twenty-four million. In 2001, the worst year in Amerindo's history, Vilar gave away more money than he ever had before. His gift pledges exceeded a hundred million dollars, including fifty million dollars to the Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C.; twenty-three million dollars to New York University; four million dollars to the Hospital for Special Surgery, in New York; ten million dollars to Columbia's medical school; twenty-five million dollars to a Denver hospital; and five million dollars to the Los Angeles Opera. This was in addition to myriad smaller but still substantial gifts: to the Vienna State Opera, to pay for new titles like those at the Met; to Plácido Domingo, to support his Operalia competition; to Lorin Maazel, the New York Philharmonic's conductor, for a new competition for conductors, the Maazel/Vilar Competition. Vilar housed the competition's staff in Amerindo's Park Avenue offices.

As companies from Vienna to Los Angeles scrambled to get Vilar's photograph into programs and enhance his recognition, he made his most controversial proposition yet. He suggested to Beverly Sills that he and other donors of opera productions appear onstage on the opening night, along with the singers, the conductor, and the creative team, to receive the audience's applause. "I told her, 'Beverly, we need to do everything to get people to write checks. I mean, three million dollars, not three thousand dollars,'" he said. Vilar told me that at the Vilar Center for the Arts, in Beaver Creek, which he had established in 1998, he had invited a donor—a local businessman—to take a bow, and "he was so thrilled he gave again." At the Metropolitan, "Just about everybody but the carpenter takes a bow. The donor should be onstage. Who would get the most applause? I'd bet my last nickel it would be the

BUCKS
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"Et tu, Juan?"

donor. They'd give that person a standing ovation."

Although Vilar ultimately did take the stage in both Washington and Los Angeles, in New York the suggestion met with an icy response from Sills, and implacable hostility from Volpe. When the Vilar-financed "War and Peace" premièred at the Met, on February 14, 2002, he remained in his seat in the front row as the curtain rose for the final bows. "Beverly said I was arrogant, that I wanted too much. But I would have gone up there. I was proud of what I'd done. All I wanted was for people to love opera."

It was increasingly apparent to those on Amerindo's staff and to Tony Knerr, a philanthropy consultant, that Vilar was making pledges of money he didn't have and had little or no likelihood of ever fulfilling. In October, 2001, Vilar embarked on an opera tour of Germany as the guest of the German government. The trip culminated in a dinner and press conference at the American Academy in Berlin, which Vilar had promised to help finance a new conservatory, with a concert hall and practice rooms. One member of his staff warned him, "Alberto, you cannot announce another gift." Vilar insisted that he understood. Then, at a press conference in Berlin, with German journalists in attendance, Vilar announced that he was giving thirty million dollars to a Berlin opera company. The next day, news of the pledge and his photograph were on the front page of several Berlin newspapers.

Later that year, the actress and singer Julie Andrews and Dr. Steven Zeitels, a voice specialist, visited Vilar at his office. Andrews had all but lost her singing voice after surgery to remove a cyst from her vocal cords, in 1997, and she and Zeitels were raising money for research that would focus on voice loss and restoring singers' voices. Vilar, after again being reminded by his staff that he was defaulting on commitments already made, emerged from the meeting to announce that he had pledged five million dollars for the research. "Asking Alberto for money was like offering an alcoholic a drink," one close friend noted.

Although Zeitels never received any payment on the pledge, he believes that Vilar was well intentioned. He explained recently that, as a voice expert, "I see the biomechanics of the throat. I'm a human lie detector." When Vilar made his pledge, Zeitels assured me, "he was absolutely sincere." (Fortunately for Zeitels, the Eugene B. Casey Foundation agreed to fund his research, and endowed a chair for him at Harvard Medical School.)

No matter how conditional or delayed the payments, at some point Vilar's many pledges would have to be honored, in whole or in part. Vilar continued to believe that the Nasdaq would rebound. "It has to," he repeatedly told members of his staff. In the summer of 2002, Tony Knerr volunteered to inform the various beneficiaries of Vilar's pledges that he couldn't honor them and to try to renegotiate the payments. Another employee urged Vilar to explain that "the market had gone down, then September 11th. Use the word 'sorry' or not, but communicate with them. Word will get out, there will be a few bad articles, then it will blow over. You've already given a hundred million dollars. You've been generous. So you went too far."

Vilar initially rebuffed the suggestions. "No one will dare say anything about this," he confidently predicted. "The market will come back. So I owe the Met five million dollars. I'll give Volpe five hundred thousand, which will be enough to keep him quiet." Eventually, Vilar allowed Knerr to renegotiate some pledges, but he was upset when he was told that the Met had refused to bargain. He told me that the Met and other recipients of his largesse should have shown him more courtesy, understanding, and flexibility. "I'd given the Met twenty million dollars—I didn't want to renege. I have a proven track record. I had a unique love of the art form. I was at the forefront of new technologies. The big fortunes have been made in the equity markets. If you're smart, you say, 'Vilar will be back!' Why write me off?"

In June, 2002, Vilar met with Lily Cates, to suggest that she invest in a new technology fund that he was launching, which would be backed by matching funds from the U.S. Small Business Administration. (The S.B.A. used the program to help finance small, often minority-led investment firms that wouldn't otherwise qualify for bank loans.) Cates, who makes no pretense of being financially sophisticated, has maintained that Vilar told her that if she invested five million dollars she could count on cash payments of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars every three months—a twenty-percent annual return—plus further capital appreciation. Despite the recent decline in value of her other accounts at Amerindo, Cates agreed, and on June 19th her bank wired five million dollars to Amerindo for the new investment, known as a Small Business Investment Company. At the time, Vilar had begun the application process but had not yet been granted approval for an S.B.I.C. by the Small Business Administration.

According to records obtained by the S.E.C., within days of receipt of Cates's five-million-dollar investment a million dollars was transferred to Vilar's personal checking account at Chase Manhattan Bank, $3.1 million was wired to a Luxembourg account, and six hundred and fifty thousand dollars was placed in an account used by Amerindo for routine business expenses. Of the million dollars transferred to Vilar's account, all but forty-five thousand was gone within two weeks. During that period, the account reflects transfers of $540,000 to Washington & Jefferson College, $177,000 to the American Academy in Berlin, and $14,640.08 to a catering service; $1,000 in A.T.M. cash withdrawals; and $255.56 for the repair of a dishwasher at his U.N. Plaza apartment. (Luxembourg's strict bank-secrecy laws have thus far prevented the disclosure of the owner of that account or any activity in it.)

Meanwhile, the Met had been receiving regular statements purporting to reflect the management of Vilar's contributions toward the twenty-million-dollar guarantee. Though he continued to occupy his front-row seats throughout the season, as the due date approached he stopped returning calls from the Met's development office, and in May, 2003, he missed the Met's annual board meeting for the first time, citing illness. The Met's finance director told Volpe that she'd heard a rumor that Vilar was in financial straits. Volpe called Vilar at least six times. Each call was met with a polite response from Vilar's staff and a promise that Vilar would get back to him. But Vilar returned none of the calls.

When the Met pledge came due, later that year, no payment was forthcoming, but Vilar's hunch that the Met would say nothing turned out to be correct. He even remained a managing director, though he stopped attending committee meetings.

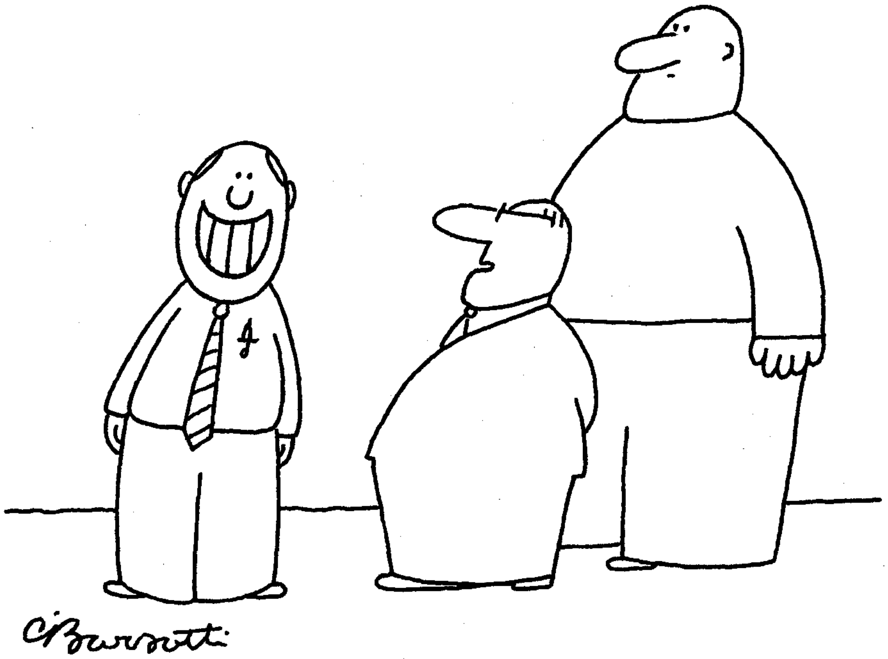
In January, 2002, Vilar had agreed to meet with his friend Plácido Domingo, who serves as general director of both the Washington National and the Los Angeles operas. By this time, Vilar had failed to honor payments for the opening-night gala and the production of Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades" and Wagner's "Lohengrin," in Los Angeles, and the gala and the production of Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffman," in Washington, even though he attended the galas and was honored with a full page in the programs and his picture in the lobbies. Both companies were under severe financial stress, since the money Vilar had promised had already been spent.

Vilar told Domingo that his payments would resume on March 31st, and would continue every three months thereafter, under a new system that he and Tanaka had instituted at the firm. Knowing how desperately the companies needed the cash, Domingo offered to advance the money in Vilar's name: $1.3 million to the Los Angeles Opera and seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars to Washington. Vilar readily agreed, assuring Domingo that he'd repay him. Vilar even promised to fund the Vilar/Domingo Young Artists' Program in Washington and pay for a new production of Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor," for the 2002–03 season.

Domingo was satisfied, and transferred $2.05 million in Vilar's name. The first two scheduled payments never arrived. Vilar didn't return Domingo's phone calls or offer any explanation. Finally, on October 8, 2002, Domingo sent Vilar a friendly five-page letter, reminding him of his many promises and the millions that the opera companies had spent in anticipation of his payments, and asking for a new schedule for repaying the $2.05-million advance. Vilar never replied.

Vilar continued to use a limousine, dine out, and travel first class—provided that the expense could be billed to the company. At home, he didn't have cash to pay the laundry bill or the housekeeper, or to take a cab. One afternoon, he took the company limousine to buy a pair of gloves. The sixty-dollar charge was rejected by American Express and he had to leave the gloves behind.

During the summer of 2001, Vilar was, as usual, at the Salzburg Festival, staying at the Sacher Hotel. One day, he got into a conver-



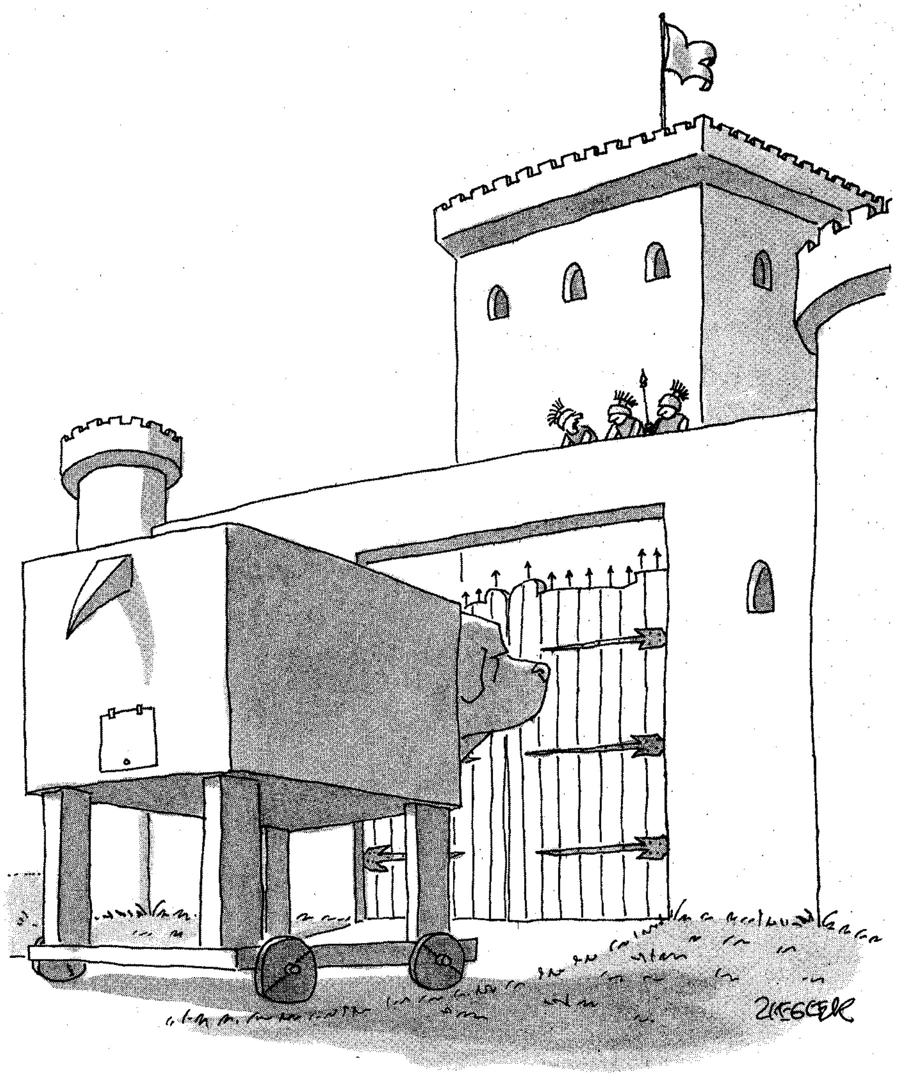
"Good news, Brixton, I've hired a bruiser to knock some sense into you."

sation with a thirty-seven-year-old musicologist named Karen Painter, who taught at Harvard. When Vilar was hospitalized shortly afterward, Painter came to visit. Vilar seemed impressed by her academic credentials, and after his recovery he frequently mentioned them to acquaintances. What followed amounted to, in Vilar's words, "a civilized long-distance relationship." A year later, at the Bayreuth Festival, during Act III of "Lohengrin," as Lohengrin and Elsa approached the wedding bier accompanied by the orchestral strains of the "Wedding March," Vilar slipped the Cartier diamond ring onto Painter's finger. Soon afterward, friends received an engraved notice to "save the date" of October 12, 2002. (Painter insists that the announcement came as a surprise to her and she never considered herself to be engaged to Vilar.)

Painter became increasingly skeptical of Vilar's purported wealth and his story of having escaped the Castro revolution. One day, she looked at his passport, and noticed that his given name was not Alberto but Albert, and that he had been born not in Havana but in East Orange, New Jersey. When she asked him about it, Vilar said that his parents had been on a brief business trip and his mother had given birth to him before they could return to Cuba. In late September of 2002, recipients of the "save the date" cards received another engraved notice. This one said, "The event scheduled for 12 October has been postponed." The ring was returned to Vilar.

According to others who have known him well, most of the life story Vilar had laid claim to was fiction. Although his father was indeed Cuban, his mother was Irish-American, and the family had never lived in Cuba. The father worked as an executive for a sugar company with offices in Manhattan.

When I asked Vilar if he had embellished his past, he backed off the more colorful aspects, including the claim that he lived in Cuba and that the family had fled the Castro revolution. "We're talking about the first five years of my life. I moved to Puerto Rico when I was seven. I went to grade and high school in Puerto Rico. My father was born and raised in Cuba. He was transferred to New York, but he commuted between New York and Havana. I was raised by my grandmother to be a hundred per cent Cuban. I consider myself Hispanic."



"You're right, sir—it is cute. But the last time we let one of these things in the entire kingdom was overrun with ticks, mites, and fleas."

In the spring of 2003, when a woman on Vilar's staff called to renew his subscription to the Met, she was informed that Vilar's seats, A101 and A102, were unavailable. Vilar was horrified. "They had given them away!" he recalled. "Those were my seats. It was like my wife had left me." Vilar said that he didn't want any other seats, and arranged a meeting with Christine Hunter, the new chair. He demanded his seats back. "We'll see what we can do," she said. He says that he never heard from her again.

As word of Vilar's financial plight and his failure to honor his commitments began to spread, several mutual friends warned Lily Cates that her investments with Vilar might be imperilled. At first, she resisted the suggestion, pointing out the success of her early investments with him and, invoking their close friendship, insisting that "Alberto will always return my calls." But eventually even Cates became concerned. A promised interest payment of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars failed to materialize, and Vilar stopped returning her phone calls. Finally, in March of 2003, he agreed to have dinner with her at Patsy's restaurant, on West Fifty-sixth Street.

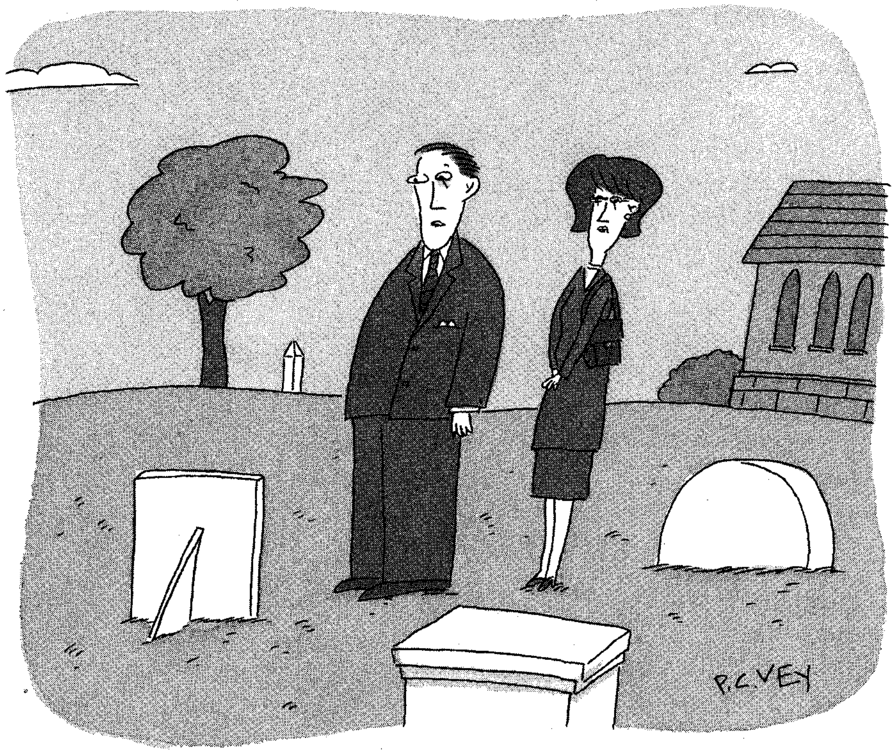
Before the dinner, he sent Cates a long letter attempting to justify his actions:

> Trust me when I tell you that I understand your frustration, and frankly shudder at the idea that our long-standing re-

> lationship has suffered. You are important to this firm and to me personally.... I have two principal goals for dinner. First is to have you fully understand that there is a world of difference between a "cash squeeze," which has impacted us, and in turn you, and a capital loss that will never be recovered. My second goal is to bring you up-to-date on the extraordinary undertakings that the firm has embarked on since last September, that we think should prove very beneficial to the company, and in turn to you.

Vilar wrote that "the future is quite constructive for our technology sector, with the new Internet-Networking wave likely to get under way this year," and noted that her five-million-dollar S.B.I.C. investment was being safely held in escrow:

> Ninety-nine plus per cent of all money managers are turned down for SBA Funds. We were approved for this in early 2000, which we were very proud of securing....We are now awaiting permission to commence investing the funds we have placed into escrow, which we expect to happen fairly soon.



"He looks just the way he did in life."

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Cates was mollified. S.B.A. records, however, indicate that Amerindo's application for a small-business investment vehicle was denied in 2000. In response to a second application and additional submissions, in 2002, an S.B.A. investment officer wrote Vilar in late December of that year, less than three months before the dinner at Patsy's, suggesting that he abandon the effort, because "ultimately, the Agency Licensing Committee would reject your application." After another failed application for the small-business funds, in 2004, Congress declined to fund the S.B.I.C. program, effectively terminating it.

A year after the dinner at Patsy's, Cates had received no interest payments, or even any statement regarding her investments, and in March, 2004, her accountant wrote to Vilar demanding an explanation. Saying that he was "taken aback" by the letter, Vilar repeated that Cates's five million dollars was safely lodged in an escrow account awaiting investment in the S.B.I.C., and when those investments commenced, he wrote to the accountant, "we will be looking at the best prices probably ever seen in the four decade plus history of technology based, venture capital. I have told Lily that this could be the best investment of her lifetime. It is simply not the case that this investment was going to generate $250,000 per quarter at this time. This has obviously been confused with something I'm not familiar with." Nonetheless, he went on, "we are hopeful that we will be in a position to resume payments later this year."

The negotiations between Cates's accountant and Vilar became increasingly strained. In a statement for the period ending September 30, 2004, Amerindo valued Cates's accounts at a total of $12.2 million, including five million dollars in "funds on deposit with SBIC (value date 06.20.02)" and "interest on SBIC deposit" of two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. In December, Cates's lawyer, Edward Swanson, notified Vilar that she had decided that she was no longer interested in investing in an S.B.I.C. and was demanding return of the five million dollars.

Vilar replied, "As could be expected, we are not at liberty to liquidate that investment on demand, as it constitutes part of the $10 million minimum the General Partner was required to come up with to initiate the fund."

When no payment was forthcoming, Swanson notified Vilar in February, 2005, that Cates "has decided upon a 'total divorce' with Amerindo.... This will confirm in writing that Lily Cates desires to close her account with Amerindo."

Vilar responded that Cates was a client of the Panama office, and thus notice of any termination had to be sent there, adding that various "fees" and "taxes payable" would be deducted from her account before she was reimbursed. That prompted an angry letter from Cates, faxed to Amerindo's offices in Panama, New York, and London:

> I found the letter dated February 17, 2005 from Alberto Vilar to my attorney quite insulting, in requiring me to provide written notice to the Panama address of Amerindo before Amerindo would comply with my instructions. I have frequently dealt with Alberto and other Amerindo associates in New York, and have also talked by phone with Amerindo associates in London, without this "requirement" ever being raised. I also have never before heard that there were "fees" relating to my account of nearly 20 years that Amerindo has not charged and now will do so. I have in-

structed my attorney to contact the appropriate regulatory authorities regarding this and certain other concerns I have.

Vilar didn't reply to Cates or respond to further phone calls from Swanson, and no funds were transferred from Amerindo to Cates. A month later, Swanson approached the S.E.C., which, on April 8th, wrote Vilar demanding an explanation by Friday, May 20th.

Vilar told me that he considered the S.E.C. letter, which was accompanied by Swanson's letter of complaint on Cates's behalf, as a routine regulatory request, and he referred it to his compliance officer, Dana Smith. The afternoon of the day that the response was due, Vilar, Gary Tanaka, Smith, and an outside lawyer convened in Vilar's Park Avenue offices, with two other lawyers participating by phone.

In the letter drafted for the S.E.C., Vilar's explanation hinged on the assertion that Cates was a client of Amerindo Panama, "which has, at all times, been a separate legal entity from Amerindo." Vilar asserted that Amerindo Panama had been sold to unidentified "present owners" in 2001, and that "there is no common ownership with respect to Amerindo and Amerindo Panama." Vilar added, "We are confident that Amerindo Panama would have no objection" to Cates's closing her account, a process that would nonetheless be "complex." He went on:

> This is because we understand that what remains to be liquidated are entirely private placement securities, for which there is no public market. Even if buyers can be found for such illiquid securities, industry practice is that they tend to be sold for typically 10% to 20% of their original costs. . . . When Lily Cates decided to terminate her investment relationship with Amerindo Panama, she and her lawyer were told that every effort would be undertaken to sell her illiquid investments. . . . Several efforts have been made to contact Cates's lawyer to discuss this matter further, but there has been no response yet.

The letter made no mention of any S.B.I.C. investment. When I asked Vilar about it, he said, "Three lawyers wrote that letter. It was like getting a camel through the eye of a needle." He added that he had spoken many times with Cates, who understood that the money might go into an S.B.I.C. or might be invested in illiquid private placements. According to Vilar, "Lily would have invested in anything I suggested," and when he discussed the options Cates told him, "I don't want to know. I just want to be worth fifty million dollars at the end of this."

Vilar said that his time on the S.E.C. letter had been limited, since he had to leave the office by six o'clock for dinner at O'Neals' restaurant, followed by a performance by the New York Philharmonic. The finished letter was faxed to the S.E.C. late that evening.

That night, Vilar sat in his usual seats in Avery Fisher Hall as his friend and beneficiary Lorin Maazel conducted the Philharmonic in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Vilar told me that the chorus's concluding "Ode to Joy" helped put the bear market and his own financial woes in a more modest perspective. "It was marvellous," he said of the performance.

Vilar is slowly being erased from the annals of philanthropy. In 2003, the Metropolitan Opera removed his name from the Grand Tier—a discovery that Vilar made when a *Times* reporter called to ask for comment. He was quietly dropped as a managing director. Covent Garden announced that it was removing his name from Floral Hall. His photograph vanished from programs at last summer's Salzburg Festival. On January 5th, the Met announced that Mercedes Bass was donating twenty-five million dollars to replace Vilar's pledge, the largest gift in the Met's history. In announcing the gift, Volpe noted that it was both unrestricted and in cash, not a pledge.

After Vilar's arrest, the S.E.C. installed a monitor at Amerindo's New York offices, to oversee the closing of the firm. Amerindo no longer has any clients. Vilar maintains that when he was arrested he was on the brink of a financial comeback. "We were up two hundred and fifty per cent from the bottom of the bear market," he told me. "Everything I predicted about the Internet has come true. My biggest positions were Google and Gilead Technologies. Google is up five hundred per cent! I think I could have been the No. 1 money manager this year. We were about to launch three new hedge funds. My sector is in a running bull market. I'm ready to go back to work and make money."

The trial of Vilar and Tanaka, on counts of money laundering and mail, securities, and wire fraud, is scheduled to begin April 17th. A new indictment, handed down at the end of January, added four unnamed victims and expanded the charges to include money laundering and fraud dating to 1986. The S.E.C. has filed parallel charges and has expanded its original complaint to add fraud charges involving other clients. The government alleges that Tanaka used some of his gains to invest in racehorses.

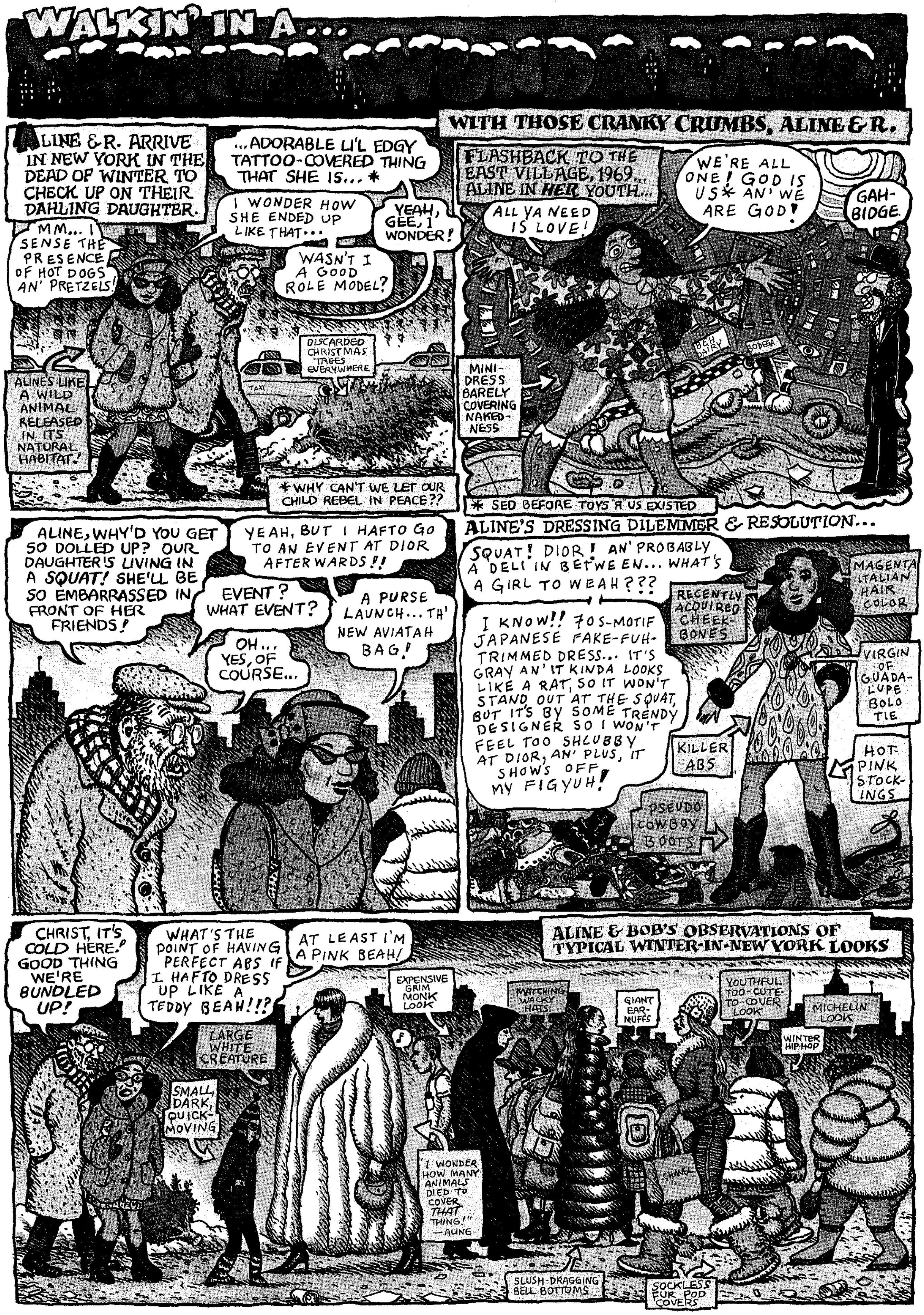
If convicted on all charges, Vilar and Tanaka face fines of more than ten million dollars and prison terms of up to a hundred and fifty-five years. Such prospects seem to have done little to blunt Vilar's philanthropic aspirations. He is counting on the skills of his lawyer, Hoffman. "My fate is in the hands of my Maker and Jeffrey," he said. "We'll sort this out. I'll get beyond this. I will always try to help others. Lately, my mind and heart have shifted toward medical science, which really interests me. I'd like to finance breakthroughs in cancer and neurological diseases.

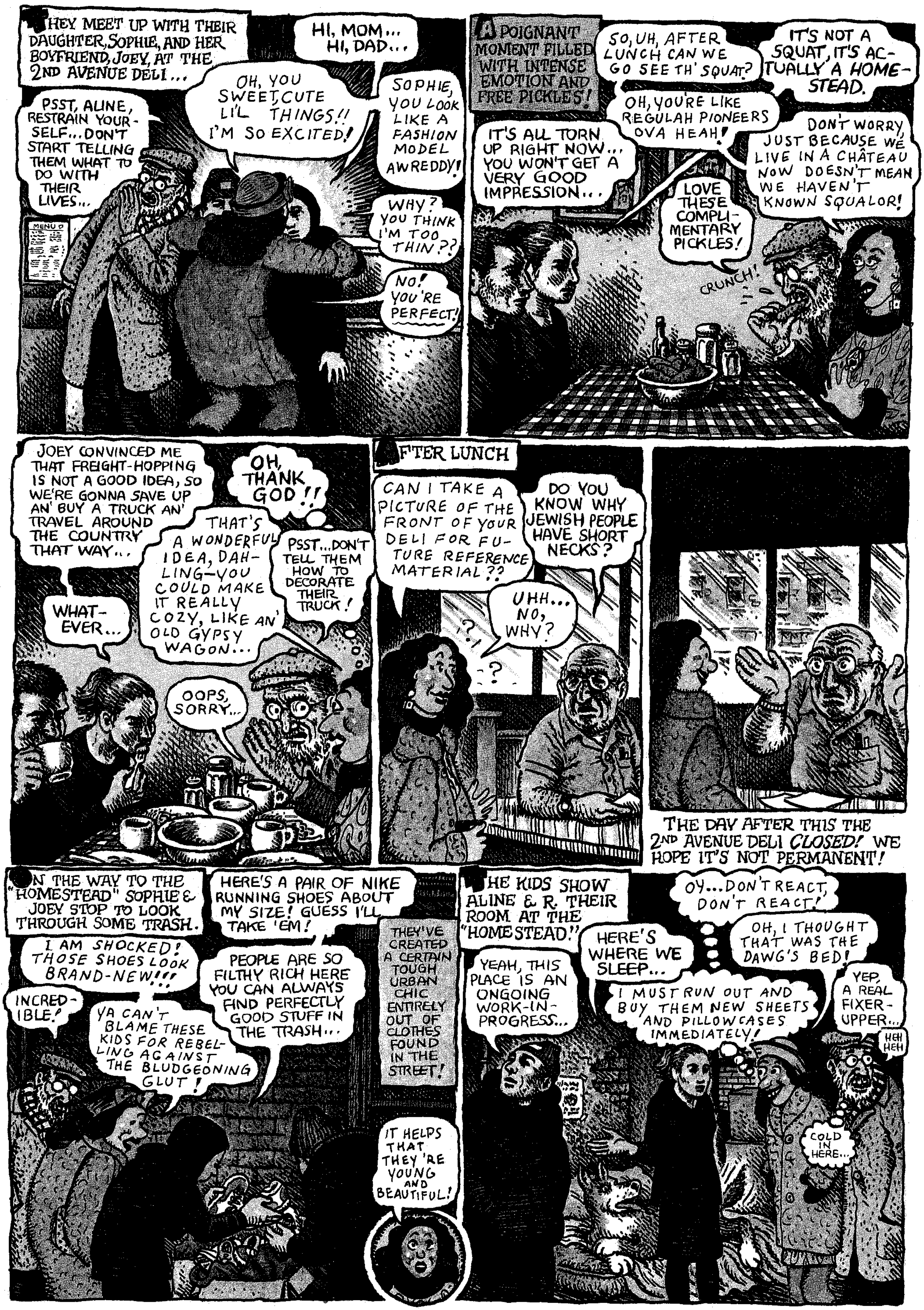
"I still love opera and classical music," he continued. "Gergiev called me October 4th to wish me a happy birthday. The Met is not going to get my money, but it will not kill my love of music."

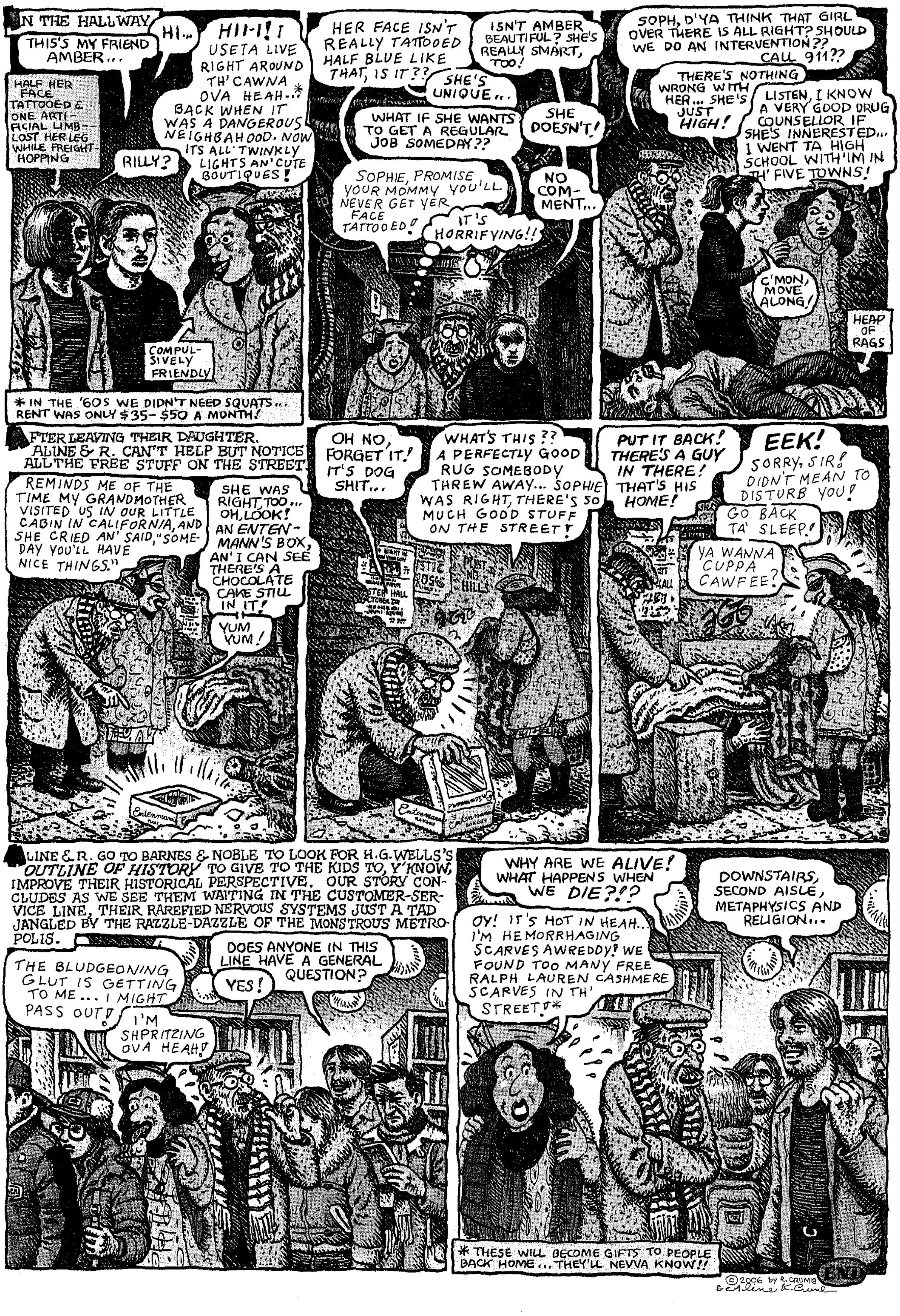
All in all, the Metropolitan Opera has done very well by Vilar. Had he not made his ill-advised twenty-million-dollar pledge, Mercedes Bass might have had no incentive to make good on it. And, in Vilar's flush years, he enriched the institution by nearly twelve million dollars. He remains the third-largest individual donor in the Met's history, surpassed only by Sybil Harrington and Bass. This season, ticket-holders who look closely can still find his name on Met programs, in small print, as the donor of Zeffirelli's production of "La Traviata," which has returned to the repertoire. ♦

WALKIN' IN A...

WITH THOSE CRANKY CRUMBS, ALINE & R.


ALINE & R. ARRIVE IN NEW YORK IN THE DEAD OF WINTER TO CHECK UP ON THEIR DAHLING DAUGHTER.
...ADORABLE LI'L EDGY TATTOO-COVERED THING THAT SHE IS... *
MM... I SENSE THE PRESENCE OF HOT DOGS AN' PRETZELS!
I WONDER HOW SHE ENDED UP LIKE THAT...
YEAH, GEE, I WONDER!
WASN'T I A GOOD ROLE MODEL?
DISCARDED CHRISTMAS TREES EVERYWHERE
TAXI
ALINE'S LIKE A WILD ANIMAL RELEASED IN ITS NATURAL HABITAT!
* WHY CAN'T WE LET OUR CHILD REBEL IN PEACE??
FLASHBACK TO THE EAST VILLAGE, 1969... ALINE IN HER YOUTH...
ALL YA NEED IS LOVE!
WE'RE ALL ONE! GOD IS US* AN' WE ARE GOD!
GAH-BIDGE.
B&H DAIRY
BODEGA
MINI-DRESS BARELY COVERING NAKED-NESS
* SED BEFORE TOYS "R" US EXISTED
ALINE, WHY'D YOU GET SO DOLLED UP? OUR DAUGHTER'S LIVING IN A SQUAT! SHE'LL BE SO EMBARRASSED IN FRONT OF HER FRIENDS!
YEAH, BUT I HAFTO GO TO AN EVENT AT DIOR AFTERWARDS!!
EVENT? WHAT EVENT?
A PURSE LAUNCH... TH' NEW AVIATAH BAG!
OH... YES, OF COURSE...
ALINE'S DRESSING DILEMMER & RESOLUTION...
SQUAT! DIOR! AN' PROBABLY A DELI IN BETWEEN... WHAT'S A GIRL TO WEAH???
I KNOW!! 70s-MOTIF JAPANESE FAKE-FUH-TRIMMED DRESS... IT'S GRAY AN' IT KINDA LOOKS LIKE A RAT, SO IT WON'T STAND OUT AT THE SQUAT, BUT IT'S BY SOME TRENDY DESIGNER SO I WON'T FEEL TOO SHLUBBY AT DIOR, AN' PLUS, IT SHOWS OFF MY FIGYUH!
RECENTLY ACQUIRED CHEEK-BONES
MAGENTA ITALIAN HAIR COLOR
VIRGIN OF GUADA-LUPE BOLO TIE
KILLER ABS
HOT-PINK STOCK-INGS
PSEUDO COWBOY BOOTS
CHRIST, IT'S COLD HERE! GOOD THING WE'RE BUNDLED UP!
WHAT'S THE POINT OF HAVING PERFECT ABS IF I HAFTO DRESS UP LIKE A TEDDY BEAH!!?
AT LEAST I'M A PINK BEAH!
ALINE & BOB'S OBSERVATIONS OF TYPICAL WINTER-IN-NEW YORK LOOKS
LARGE WHITE CREATURE
SMALL, DARK, QUICK-MOVING
EXPENSIVE GRIM MONK LOOK
MATCHING WACKY HATS
GIANT EAR-MUFFS
YOUTHFUL TOO-CUTE-TO-COVER LOOK
MICHELIN LOOK
WINTER HIP-HOP
"I WONDER HOW MANY ANIMALS DIED TO COVER THAT THING!" —ALINE
CHANEL
SLUSH-DRAGGING BELL BOTTOMS
SOCKLESS FUR POD COVERS


THEY MEET UP WITH THEIR DAUGHTER, SOPHIE, AND HER BOYFRIEND, JOEY, AT THE 2ND AVENUE DELI...
HI, MOM... HI, DAD...
OH, YOU SWEET, CUTE LI'L THINGS!! I'M SO EXCITED!
SOPHIE, YOU LOOK LIKE A FASHION MODEL AWREDDY!
PSST, ALINE, RESTRAIN YOURSELF... DON'T START TELLING THEM WHAT TO DO WITH THEIR LIVES...
WHY? YOU THINK I'M TOO THIN??
NO! YOU'RE PERFECT!
MENU
A POIGNANT MOMENT FILLED WITH INTENSE EMOTION AND FREE PICKLES!
SO, UH, AFTER LUNCH CAN WE GO SEE TH' SQUAT?
IT'S NOT A SQUAT, IT'S ACTUALLY A HOMESTEAD.
OH, YOU'RE LIKE REGULAH PIONEERS OVA HEAH!
IT'S ALL TORN UP RIGHT NOW... YOU WON'T GET A VERY GOOD IMPRESSION...
DON'T WORRY, JUST BECAUSE WE LIVE IN A CHÂTEAU NOW DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVEN'T KNOWN SQUALOR!
LOVE THESE COMPLIMENTARY PICKLES!
CRUNCH!
JOEY CONVINCED ME THAT FREIGHT-HOPPING IS NOT A GOOD IDEA, SO WE'RE GONNA SAVE UP AN' BUY A TRUCK AN' TRAVEL AROUND THE COUNTRY THAT WAY...
OH, THANK GOD!!
THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA, DAHLING—YOU COULD MAKE IT REALLY COZY, LIKE AN' OLD GYPSY WAGON...
PSST... DON'T TELL THEM HOW TO DECORATE THEIR TRUCK!
WHATEVER...
OOPS, SORRY...
AFTER LUNCH
CAN I TAKE A PICTURE OF THE FRONT OF YOUR DELI FOR FUTURE REFERENCE MATERIAL??
DO YOU KNOW WHY JEWISH PEOPLE HAVE SHORT NECKS?
UHH... NO, WHY?
??
THE DAY AFTER THIS THE 2ND AVENUE DELI CLOSED! WE HOPE IT'S NOT PERMANENT!
ON THE WAY TO THE "HOMESTEAD" SOPHIE & JOEY STOP TO LOOK THROUGH SOME TRASH.
HERE'S A PAIR OF NIKE RUNNING SHOES ABOUT MY SIZE! GUESS I'LL TAKE 'EM!
I AM SHOCKED! THOSE SHOES LOOK BRAND-NEW!!!
INCREDIBLE!
PEOPLE ARE SO FILTHY RICH HERE YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND PERFECTLY GOOD STUFF IN THE TRASH...
YA CAN'T BLAME THESE KIDS FOR REBELLING AGAINST THE BLUDGEONING GLUT!
THEY'VE CREATED A CERTAIN TOUGH URBAN CHIC ENTIRELY OUT OF CLOTHES FOUND IN THE STREET!
IT HELPS THAT THEY'RE YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL!
THE KIDS SHOW ALINE & R. THEIR ROOM AT THE "HOMESTEAD."
OY... DON'T REACT, DON'T REACT!
HERE'S WHERE WE SLEEP...
OH, I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE DAWG'S BED!
YEAH, THIS PLACE IS AN ONGOING WORK-IN-PROGRESS...
I MUST RUN OUT AND BUY THEM NEW SHEETS AND PILLOWCASES IMMEDIATELY!
YEP, A REAL FIXER-UPPER...
HEH HEH
COLD IN HERE...


IN THE HALLWAY
THIS'S MY FRIEND AMBER...
HI..
HII-I!! USETA LIVE RIGHT AROUND TH' CAWNA OVA HEAH..* BACK WHEN IT WAS A DANGEROUS NEIGHBAHOOD. NOW ITS ALL TWINKLY LIGHTS AN' CUTE BOUTIQUES!
HALF HER FACE TATTOOED & ONE ARTIFICIAL LIMB -- LOST HER LEG WHILE FREIGHT-HOPPING
RILLY?
COMPULSIVELY FRIENDLY
* IN THE '60S WE DIDN'T NEED SQUATS... RENT WAS ONLY $35-$50 A MONTH!
HER FACE ISN'T REALLY TATTOOED HALF BLUE LIKE THAT, IS IT??
ISN'T AMBER BEAUTIFUL? SHE'S REALLY SMART, TOO!
SHE'S UNIQUE...
WHAT IF SHE WANTS TO GET A REGULAR JOB SOMEDAY??
SHE DOESN'T!
SOPHIE, PROMISE YOUR MOMMY YOU'LL NEVER GET YER FACE TATTOOED!
IT'S HORRIFYING!!
NO COMMENT...
SOPH, D'YA THINK THAT GIRL OVER THERE IS ALL RIGHT? SHOULD WE DO AN INTERVENTION?? CALL 911??
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HER... SHE'S JUST HIGH!
LISTEN, I KNOW A VERY GOOD DRUG COUNSELLOR IF SHE'S INNERESTED... I WENT TA HIGH SCHOOL WITH 'IM IN TH' FIVE TOWNS!
C'MON, MOVE ALONG!
HEAP OF RAGS
AFTER LEAVING THEIR DAUGHTER, ALINE & R. CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE ALL THE FREE STUFF ON THE STREET.
REMINDS ME OF THE TIME MY GRANDMOTHER VISITED US IN OUR LITTLE CABIN IN CALIFORNIA, AND SHE CRIED AN' SAID, "SOMEDAY YOU'LL HAVE NICE THINGS."
SHE WAS RIGHT, TOO... OH, LOOK! AN ENTENMANN'S BOX, AN' I CAN SEE THERE'S A CHOCOLATE CAKE STILL IN IT!
YUM YUM!
Entenmann's
OH NO, FORGET IT! IT'S DOG SHIT...
WHAT'S THIS?? A PERFECTLY GOOD RUG SOMEBODY THREW AWAY... SOPHIE WAS RIGHT, THERE'S SO MUCH GOOD STUFF ON THE STREET!
POST NO BILLS
PUT IT BACK! THERE'S A GUY IN THERE! THAT'S HIS HOME!
EEK!
SORRY, SIR! DIDN'T MEAN TO DISTURB YOU!
GO BACK TA' SLEEP!
YA WANNA CUPPA CAWFEE?
ALINE & R. GO TO BARNES & NOBLE TO LOOK FOR H.G. WELLS'S OUTLINE OF HISTORY TO GIVE TO THE KIDS TO, Y'KNOW, IMPROVE THEIR HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. OUR STORY CONCLUDES AS WE SEE THEM WAITING IN THE CUSTOMER-SERVICE LINE, THEIR RAREFIED NERVOUS SYSTEMS JUST A TAD JANGLED BY THE RAZZLE-DAZZLE OF THE MONSTROUS METROPOLIS.
THE BLUDGEONING GLUT IS GETTING TO ME... I MIGHT PASS OUT!
I'M SHPRITZING OVA HEAH!
DOES ANYONE IN THIS LINE HAVE A GENERAL QUESTION?
YES!
WHY ARE WE ALIVE! WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?!?
DOWNSTAIRS, SECOND AISLE, METAPHYSICS AND RELIGION...
OY! IT'S HOT IN HEAH... I'M HEMORRHAGING SCARVES AWREDDY! WE FOUND TOO MANY FREE RALPH LAUREN CASHMERE SCARVES IN TH' STREET!*
* THESE WILL BECOME GIFTS TO PEOPLE BACK HOME... THEY'LL NEVVA KNOW!!
END
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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE STAND-OFF

How jihadi groups helped provoke the twenty-first century's first nuclear crisis.

BY STEVE COLL

THE ATTACK

At about eleven-thirty on the morning of December 13, 2001, a white Ambassador with tinted glass and a flashing red light on top—the distinctive car of Indian officialdom—arrived at Parliament House in New Delhi. Five men were inside. They carried three pistols, four automatic assault rifles, spare ammunition, a grenade launcher, fifteen grenades, several handmade bombs of medium size, and, in the trunk of the car, a large bomb made from ammonium nitrate. A forged Home Ministry sticker had been pasted on the car's windshield; on the back of the sticker, it was later discovered, someone had scrawled a vow to "destroy" India. The men passed through an outer gate and approached Gate No. 1, a sandstone portico opposite an enormous statue of Mohandas K. Gandhi.

Parliament House, which was designed and built in the last decades of the British Raj, is a graceful, russet oval with unusually thick walls. Twelve gates lead to a circular inner hallway, and within that ring are the two airy chambers that house the country's raucous bicameral parliament. That morning, the assemblies were in session, and among those in attendance was the country's Vice-President, Krishan Kant; his motorcade stood in the driveway, ready for a quick departure. As the white Ambassador maneuvered, it crashed into the Vice-President's car, and the five attackers, who were South Asian in appearance, scrambled out. Some began to lay wires and set up bomb detonators; others immediately opened fire.

Jaswant Singh, who was at that time India's foreign minister, was at work in his office, Room 27, just off the main hallway, about twenty-five yards from Gate No. 1. Singh, an ardent Hindu nationalist from the desert state of Rajasthan, is an elegant, white-haired former soldier with prominent black eyebrows. When he heard the shooting, he rushed toward the sound, but his bodyguards stopped him. "Sir," one explained, as Singh recalled it, "you are being targeted."

The gun battle lasted almost thirty minutes. When it ended, smoke curled above Parliament House and hundreds of empty shell casings lay scattered on the ground. The attackers shot to death eight security guards and a gardener before all five were killed themselves. They had failed to reach the interior hallway or to detonate their explosives; the Vice-President's motorcade, which had been blocking the building's entrance, was "a fortuitous circumstance," the justices of India's Supreme Court later wrote. Except for that, and strong resistance from the security guards, the raid might have been remembered as the greatest catastrophe in independent India's history—the murder of much of its elected leadership. "Had the attack succeeded," an Indian trial-court judge concluded, "the entire building with all inside would have perished."

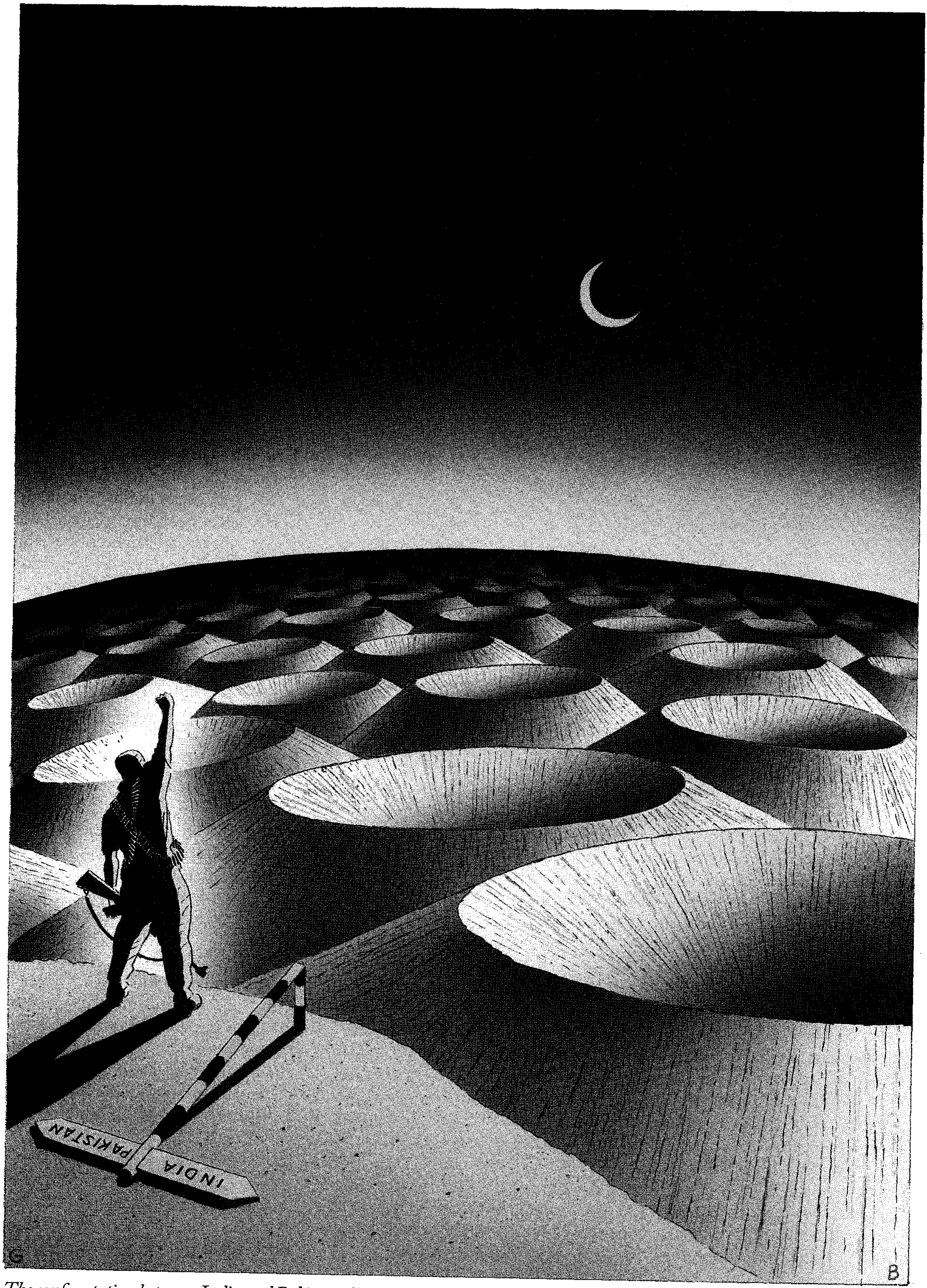
The members of India's Cabinet Committee on Security, which was then led by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, assembled late on the day of the assault. Little was known about the five attackers or their motives; a police investigation into their backgrounds and support networks had just begun. Still, the raid appeared to be part of a pattern. Brajesh Mishra, then India's national-security adviser, told me recently that he and other committee members had no doubt who was behind it: the government of Pakistan and, in particular, its external intelligence service, Inter-Services Intelligence, or I.S.I.

Since the late nineteen-eighties, I.S.I. has covertly funded and armed violent Islamic groups in the Indian-occupied areas of Kashmir. By 2001, two of the larger jihadi groups—Lashkar-e-Taiba, or the Army of the Pure, and Jaish-e-Muhammad, or Muhammad's Army—had also developed ties to the Taliban and Al Qaeda, mainly through shared training camps and safe houses. The evidence in similar attacks in major Indian cities, and Pakistan's ongoing support for these groups, led the Cabinet Committee to decide "that Pakistan must be given a very serious warning," Mishra recalled. "We debated, we talked, and we came to the conclusion that the threat of military action should be held up." Vajpayee ordered the country's armed forces to mobilize for war.

By supporting jihadi groups in Kashmir, Pakistan's generals, who have governed the country since a coup d'état in 1999, have sought to advance what they regard as a righteous cause, and to pressure India's government to negotiate over the future of Kashmir, which was divided after the partition of the subcontinent, in 1947. Pakistan's military has tried to avoid a wider war, but, time and again, it has found that managing jihadi groups can be an inexact art. On December 13th, the United States Ambassador to Pakistan, Wendy Chamberlin, happened to be visiting the two-star Pakistani general in command of the paramilitary Frontier Corps, at his headquarters in Quetta, in the western province of Baluchistan. During their meeting, the general kept his television tuned to a satellite news channel, with the sound muted. As reports of the parliament attack crossed the screen and the magnitude of the event became clear, Chamberlin asked her host for his reaction. According to a written record of the meeting, the general offered a one-word reply: "Oops."

The parliament attack received little attention in the United States, where, just three months after September 11th, the Bush Administration and the media were focussed on the war in Afghanistan. In India, however, the Parliament House raid was a deeply shock-

GUY BILLOUT


PAKISTAN
INDIA
G
B

The confrontation between India and Pakistan illustrated an unnerving new feature of the nuclear age: the rise of terrorism.

"She's just waiting for him to be worth divorcing."

• •

ing event, one that stirred the public and the media into a fury.

As India and Pakistan headed toward confrontation, it quickly became clear that more was at issue than Pakistan's covert support for jihadi groups or the dispute over Kashmir. This was the first nuclear crisis of the twenty-first century, and it was characterized by a very modern problem—that posed by stateless religious networks with millenarian ideas. Even during the early years of the Cold War, when some high-ranking generals in the United States and the Soviet Union believed that atomic bombs should be viewed as routine weapons of war, neither side had to cope with religiously motivated insurgents in its midst. And, for all the nuclear brinkmanship and bumbling of the nineteen-fifties and early sixties—culminating in the Cuban missile crisis, in 1962—neither the United States nor the Soviet Union supported groups that carried out provocative terrorist attacks on the other's home territory. Pakistan's support for jihadi groups that launched attacks in India had a rational premise: the groups offered a potent, cost-effective way for Pakistan's generals to tie down India's large force in Kashmir. But they also had a religious aspect, because some officers in Pakistan's Army had come to identify with the global ambitions of the jihadi cause.

After December 13th, the two governments were implicitly exploring new areas of nuclear strategy. "In all of the game theory and everything else considered in the West, it was always based on the assumption of rational actors on both sides," K. Subrahmanyam, a writer and national-security strategist who is regarded as an intellectual father of India's nuclear-weapons doctrines, told me. Pakistan's generals had a similar view, according to Feroz Khan, a retired Pakistani brigadier general, who helped develop Pakistan's nuclear policies—except that the Pakistani generals included India's Hindu nationalists among the irrational actors. In developing their nuclear doctrines, Khan told me, Pakistani generals knew that "Western deterrence theory had never encountered the wild cards of the jihadis and the Hindu fundamentalists." As it turned out, these challenges were compounded in Pakistan by breakdowns in its system for securing its nuclear technology.

The Parliament House attack also seemed to illustrate another unnerving feature of the nuclear age: while nuclear weapons had created a new form of military parity between India and Pakistan, they had also seemed to stimulate a rise in terrorism, particularly on Indian soil.

India declared itself a nuclear power on May 11, 1998, after it exploded several devices at the Pokhran test site, in the Rajasthan desert, including what the government claimed was India's first successful test of a thermonuclear, or hydrogen, bomb. Pakistan "settled the score," as the Prime Minister put it, by detonating five nuclear bombs at an underground site in the western Ras Koh mountain range on May 28th. Leaders in both countries issued statements about the possible use of nuclear weapons in war; their posturing represented the first attempt by two adversarial states to establish an open system of nuclear deterrence since the end of the Cold War.

Yet, even as the deployment of nuclear weapons made a conventional war on the subcontinent more risky—and therefore, perhaps, less likely—Pakistan's generals seemed to find their covert war in Kashmir more plausible. In 1999, the generals authorized a secret military incursion to seize high ridges in an Indian-held area of Kashmir called Kargil, setting off a two-month international crisis. (The Pakistanis were eventually forced to withdraw.) Afterward, jihadi groups in Kashmir began to mount bolder attacks, and to strike in Indian cities. "The Pakistanis felt that the risk of conflict with India was reduced by their adoption of overt deterrence," Sir Hilary Synnott, who was then Britain's high commissioner to Pakistan, told me. "I do think this tempted some of them into adventurism."

Indian and Pakistani leaders had a poor understanding of each other's plans for the use of nuclear weapons during war, and this presented an additional complication as the two militaries mobilized. In the days after the Parliament House strike, John McLaughlin, then the deputy C.I.A. director, reported to the Bush Cabinet that C.I.A. and other intelligence analysts believed that, because of confusion among Indian and Pakistani decision-makers about when and how a conventional war could escalate, there was a serious risk of the first hostile use of nuclear weapons since Nagasaki.

The sense of urgency within the Bush Administration was heightened by what was then a closely guarded secret. Early in 2001, the Bush White House had been briefed on an extraordinary intelligence investigation into Pakistan's nuclear-weapons program, one that appeared to show that a leading nuclear-weapons scientist, A. Q. Khan, had become a sort of international nuclear entrepreneur. In the fall of that year, the C.I.A. also learned about meetings between a second Pakistani nuclear scientist and Osama bin Laden. As the Bush Administration groped for a way to prevent a possible nuclear war between India and Pakistan, it had to consider the possibility that Pakistan's nuclear weapons might not be under firm government control. And, with its focus on the Afghan war, it was easy for the Administration to overlook the fact that the problem of jihadi terrorism was not confined to Afghanistan.

THE DIPLOMATS

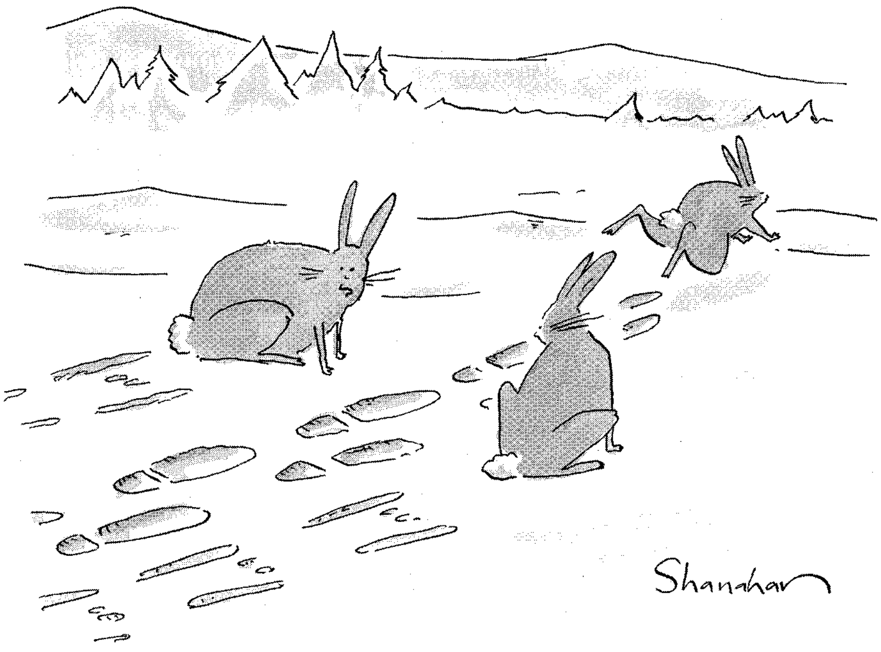
The United States Ambassador to India in late 2001 was Robert Blackwill, a former professor at Harvard, who had taught, among other things, the history of the Cuban missile crisis. Blackwill is a large, jowly, articulate man with a reputation for high energy and a willingness to engage in intense, bullying bureaucratic battles. He had had no experience in India before his appointment, but he had worked closely with Condoleezza Rice, then Bush's national-security adviser, and he had extensive contacts within the White House and the Republican Party. Based on private conversations with Bush, Blackwill told colleagues, he understood that his mission was to coax the United States and India into a closer strategic alignment. After September 11th, Blackwill concluded that the United States had common cause with India in the struggle against jihadi terrorism, and he believed that the issue offered an important opportunity to bring the two countries together.

On the morning of December 14th, India's government held a memorial service at Parliament House for the men who had died in the previous day's attack. Without consulting his superiors in Washington, Blackwill decided to attend. He drove over with bodyguards and entered the second-story observation gallery reserved for diplomats. Prime Minister Vajpayee, Foreign Minister Singh, and others in the Indian Cabinet had assembled in the chamber of the Lok Sabha, or lower house, along with many members of parliament. In the observation gallery, Blackwill was conspicuous not only because of his bearlike size but because he was the only diplomat—the only outsider of any kind—in the hall. "We really didn't expect anybody," Jaswant Singh told me. "For years—decades, in fact—we had been plowing this field alone." After the service, Blackwill approached a cluster of television cameras. "The United States and India are as one in this outrage," he declared. "The tragic event that occurred yesterday and that was perpetrated by terrorists was no different in its objective from the terror attacks in the U.S. on September 11th."

Later that day, Secretary of State Colin Powell denounced the parliament attackers as "murderers," but his tone was restrained. From New Delhi, Blackwill sent the State Department a series of urgent cables outlining his views about the Kashmir jihadi groups and the support that they received from Pakistan. Among other things, he argued that the Bush Administration should add several of the larger groups to its various lists of banned terrorist organizations. Within days, the Administration followed his advice. It was not the first time that the Bush Administration's war on terrorism was reinvented as it went along, but it was a particularly consequential intervention, coming at a time when India was citing jihadi terrorism in Kashmir as a cause for war.

Shortly after September 11th, Pakistan's President and Army chief, Pervez Musharraf, was presented with an ultimatum by the United States, and agreed to abandon his support for the Taliban. He agreed to coöperate fully with the American-led campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and he provided the U.S. military with access to Pakistani air and naval bases. (India had also offered extensive basing rights, but the Pentagon turned down this offer, partly out of deference to Musharraf.) Musharraf also agreed to coöperate with the C.I.A.—among other things, joint covert teams were established to hunt down terrorist fugitives—and he ordered Pakistani Army and paramilitary troops to set up a blocking force along the Pakistani-Afghan border, to capture Al Qaeda and Taliban members if they tried to flee east from Afghanistan.

However, all this coöperation in the fall of 2001 did not address Pakistan's support for jihadi groups operating in



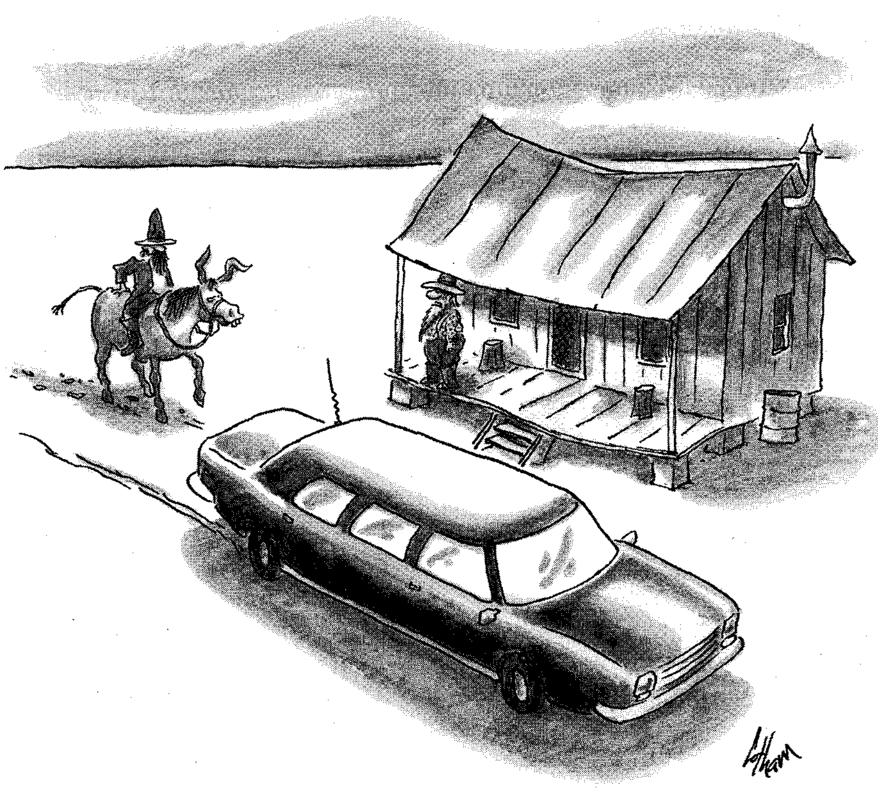
"How the hell does he do that?"

Kashmir and India. That issue seemed too sensitive and too complicated, American and Pakistani officials involved in the negotiations told me recently, and so it was set aside. George Tenet, who was then the C.I.A. director, informed colleagues that remote areas of Kashmir might offer a hiding place for Al Qaeda leaders, but, apart from this worry, the C.I.A. felt that it had too much on its agenda in Afghanistan to press Musharraf on Kashmir. "We did not treat it as a part of the global war on terrorism," Ashley J. Tellis, a scholar of South Asian military strategy, who was the senior adviser to Blackwill at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, recalled. "We would have preferred not to answer how Kashmir fit." Lalit Mansingh, who was then India's Ambassador to Washington, said, "The message we got from the State Department was the 'best bet' theory"—that Musharraf was India's best bet, because he was a relatively moderate general who had decided to back the Bush Administration's counter-terrorism agenda. "We greeted this with some skepticism," Mansingh said.

After September 11th, one of the main tasks of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, was to assure Musharraf and his senior generals that their interests were being protected. Because of his decision to embrace the United States, Musharraf had complicated his political life; he faced dissent not only from his generals but from lower-ranking officers and from Islamic religious groups and their violent jihadi affiliates. Colonel David Smith, the U.S. Army attaché in Islamabad, assessed the crisis after the Parliament House raid; there was, he wrote, "growing frustration" with Ambassador Blackwill—"first to publicly criticize Pakistan for the militant attack, and then to engage in what appeared to be a blatant attempt to manage Washington's response to the crisis from New Delhi." Smith went on, "There was a clear perception both in Islamabad and in some quarters in Washington that Blackwill was using the crisis as a vehicle to attain his own goals for U.S.-Indian relations, and that little consideration was being given to the potential adverse impact on the war on terrorism." And yet, as Christmas approached, according to Smith, both the Pentagon and the State Department "seemed to accept implicitly the Blackwill thesis that India had the moral high ground and its military response was justified." Smith and others in Islamabad noted that India was hardly blameless, and that it had long tried to destabilize Pakistan.

After the battle against Al Qaeda fighters at Tora Bora, in early December, Pentagon officials described Pakistani troops along the Afghan border as the "anvil" in a hammer-and-anvil squeeze on Al Qaeda. But Pakistan's generals could see that India was shifting divisions from as far away as Calcutta, in the east, to the western frontier with Pakistan; it looked like the largest military mobilization in Indian history. The generals told the Bush Administration that Pakistan would have no choice but to shift its own troops to the border with India. They soon redeployed the regular Army troops that made up the "anvil"; in total, more than seventy thousand troops and their equipment—two full corps, or four divisions—were moved away from the Afghan border, according to American officials. (Pakistan left some soldiers and its paramilitary forces along the border, but the paramilitaries were tribal soldiers who had clan ties to the Taliban and were less professional than Pakistan's regular Army.) American diplomats and military officers were distraught about the effect of this troop transfer on their war effort in Afghanistan, but, when they met with Musharraf and his senior generals, "there was nothing we could say to them that would sound persuasive," Colonel Smith told me. The threat from India was undeniable. "It was a matter of national survival, and we understood that."

Pakistan's military told the Americans that India was manipulating and deceiving the Bush Administration, and argued that the parliament attack had been staged by India's intelligence services to generate international pressure on Pakistan. On December 21st, Colonel Smith met with two senior Pakistani generals, one of whom oversaw intelligence analysis at I.S.I. "Both officers called into question the nature of the militant attack in New Delhi," Smith recalled, and one of them dismissed the attack as "typical Indian 'stage management.'" Three days later, Les Brownlee, the Under-Secretary of the U.S. Army, arrived in Islamabad and met with Pakistan's vice-chief of the Army, General Muhammad Yusuf Khan, who told Brownlee that he, too, suspected In-



"Your more successful brother is already here."

dian manipulation in the Parliament House assault. Feroz Khan, the retired Pakistani brigadier general, who remains close to Musharraf, told me that, even at high levels of the Pakistani government, officials think that India regularly cooks up such incidents for international effect. "This is their firm belief," Khan said.

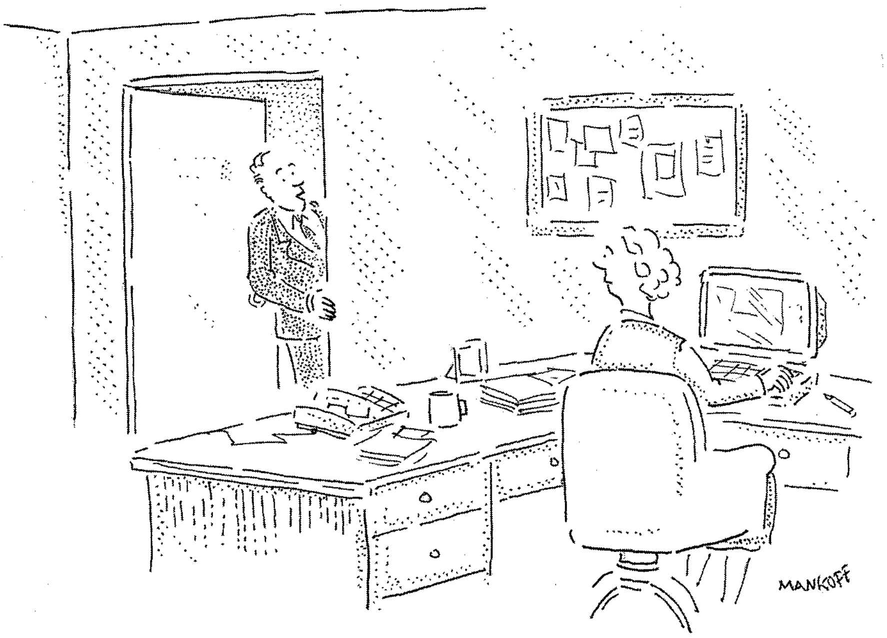
American and British officials who heard these arguments were incredulous, even though they recognized that India's government was using the December 13th attack to call attention to Pakistan's general support for jihadi groups. Citing the confessional statements of some co-conspirators arrested in New Delhi and Kashmir shortly after the attack, Indian officials claimed that Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad were responsible. (India's Supreme Court later ruled that some of these confessions had been obtained improperly and should be disregarded.) The Indian government publicly blamed I.S.I. for sponsoring not just the December raid but a series of devastating terrorist attacks against civilian targets on Indian soil, dating back to the early nineteen-nineties.

Analysts at the C.I.A. and Britain's intelligence service felt that they had evidence that I.S.I. provided systematic support to Kashmir jihadi groups, including weaponry, religious instruction, and military training at camps in Pakistan and in areas of Kashmir controlled by Pakistan's Army. I.S.I. also helped these jihadi volunteers to slip across the Line of Control, the informal but well-guarded border that divides Kashmir. By late 2001, Hilary Synnott, the British high commissioner, recalled, "I had absolutely no doubt that I.S.I. had been supporting infiltration and had been assisting with camps, and that this should stop."

Yet intelligence about whether or how I.S.I. directed particular terrorist strikes within India was less certain; according to officials familiar with C.I.A. intelligence reports, the agency did not have evidence of direct instructions from I.S.I. controllers to jihadi cells to carry out attacks such as the raid on Parliament House. Nor could India offer specific evidence about what role, if any, Pakistan's Army or its intelligence services had played in that raid.

I.S.I. is organized as a division of Pakistan's military. Some of its departments focus on the collection and analysis of foreign intelligence, while others conduct covert operations; it is also subject to military discipline, and Pakistani generals are proud of the professionalism they maintain in their ranks. Still, the close collaboration between some I.S.I. officers and their jihadi clients made American analysts, and even some Pakistani generals, doubt the loyalty and reliability of some of the I.S.I. officers working on the front lines of the Afghan and Kashmir conflicts.

India's leaders—a tight-knit band of Hindu-nationalist politicians who, during the nineteen-nineties, rose from obscurity to power by appealing to national pride and fanning popular fears about Muslim militancy—were convinced that the Parliament House raid was sanctioned at high levels of the Pakistani government. Whether Musharraf himself was briefed on the attack before it occurred "I can't say," Mishra, the national-security adviser, told me, but, as for other senior generals in the Pakistani Army, he said, "certainly they knew." L. K. Advani, India's home minister, who was deeply skeptical of Pakistan, travelled to Washington that winter, where he spoke with Vice-President Dick Cheney and, according to Mansingh, the Indian Ambassador, told him, "A dog can't cross the Line of Control without being confronted by at least three layers of Pakistani security." For his part, Mansingh said he believed that "there is absolutely no doubt that the Pakistani official establishment was deeply involved in these incidents."



"Miss Durban, is there anything C.E.O.-ish for me to do?"

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THE ESCALATION

By Christmas Day of 2001, C.I.A. and other intelligence analysts in Washington had concluded that an invasion of Pakistani territory by Indian forces could escalate to nuclear conflict. Statements by Pakistani military and political leaders have made clear that, in the face of India's much larger military and industrial power, Pakistan might, in a conventional war, resort to the use of nuclear weapons against Indian troops or cities to stave off a total military or economic collapse. Yet the generals were always deliberately vague about how much of a setback they would endure before resorting to nuclear arms; it was in their interest to convince India that the threshold was relatively low. At the same time, many of India's leaders believed that, as long as they did not allow an invasion to threaten Pakistan's survival, the threat to use nuclear weapons was a bluff. Although Mishra anticipated widespread combat that winter, he was "sure there would be no nuclear use," because Pakistan's generals knew that even if they struck several Indian cities with nuclear weapons India would still be able to retaliate with overwhelming force. “Pakistan knows India is far too big, and a second strike would destroy it,” Mishra said.

Bush Cabinet members conferred regularly over the holidays. John McLaughlin, George Tenet’s deputy at the C.I.A., was at Langley while Tenet spent Christmas in New Jersey, and McLaughlin elaborated on the significant danger of nuclear war. From its analysis of past Indo-Pakistani wars and intelligence reports, the C.I.A. stated that India might try to seize the Pakistani city of Lahore, and that, if this occurred, it might well provoke Pakistani commanders to use nuclear weapons.

U.S. Marine General Anthony Zinni, who had grown close to Musharraf while serving as commander-in-chief of the United States Central Command, told me that the comparative weakness of Pakistan’s conventional forces had put Musharraf and his generals “in a position where they had to be serious about early use” of nuclear weapons. Pakistan’s nuclear stand, was, in essence, “Use it or lose it,” Zinni said. Richard Armitage, at that time the Deputy Secretary of State, whose diplomatic and military contacts in Pakistan dated back two decades, told me that he was “absolutely” convinced that Pakistan’s generals would use nuclear weapons if they felt seriously pressed by India’s Army. “The fear was that both India and Pakistan would try to have a controlled military action, but you can’t control military action once it starts,” Armitage said. Colonel Smith, who was providing the Pentagon with analysis from Islamabad during this period, agreed with Armitage. “I lived in Pakistan for seven and a half years, mostly talking to military people,” Smith said. “Cross the red line, they would use it. No question in my mind. If their country was destroyed, so be it. They would take India down with them.”

Colin Powell telephoned Musharraf repeatedly, “general to general,” as Armitage put it, urging him to take visible steps to end his military’s support for jihadis in Kashmir. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was paying close attention to the crisis, pressed the Bush Administration to intervene directly with Musharraf and Vajpayee. In early January, he travelled to New Delhi and Islamabad to meet with the two leaders; he urged Pakistan’s government to repudiate its jihadi clients in Kashmir, so that India would have reason to show restraint.

INTO THE LINCOLN TUNNEL

The bus rolled into the Lincoln Tunnel
and I was whispering a prayer
that it not be today, not today, please
no shenanigans, no blasts, no terrors,
just please the rocking, slightly nauseating
gray ride, stop and start, chug-a
in the dim fellowship of smaller cars,
bumper lights flickering hello and warning.
Yes, please smile upon these good
people who want to enter the city and work.
Because work is good, actually, and life is good,
despite everything, and I don’t mean to sound
spoiled, but please don’t think I don’t know
how grateful I should be
for what I do have—

I wonder whom I’m praying to.
Maybe Honest Abe himself,
craggy and splendid in his tall chair,
better than God to a kid:
Lincoln whose birthday I shared,
in whom I took secret pride; born, thus I was,
to be truthful, and love freedom.

Now with a silent collective sigh
steaming out into the broken winter sun,
up the ramp to greet buildings, blue brick
and brown stone and steel, candy-corn pylons
and curving guardrails massively bolted and men
in hard hats leaning on resting machines
with paper cups of coffee—

a cup of coffee, a modest thing to ask
Abe for,
dark, bitter, fresh
as an ordinary morning.

—Deborah Garrison

On January 12, 2002, in a lengthy speech that was broadcast on Pakistani national television, Musharraf denounced religious extremists, pledged to reform Islamic schools in Pakistan, and announced a formal ban on five jihadi groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad. “Kashmir runs in our blood,” Musharraf said, and he pledged to continue “moral, political, and diplomatic support” for Kashmir’s liberation from Indian rule. But, for the first time, he also condemned the attack on India’s parliament as a “terrorist act” and equated it with September 11th, as Blackwill had done. And he said, “No organization will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir.”

It was a clear break, at least in rhetoric, with Pakistan’s recent past, and for a time the danger of war receded. India’s leaders were struck by the tone of Musharraf’s pledges, but the Cabinet Committee on Security remained uncertain about whether he was sincere. "I had to deal with Musharraf and his many incarnations," Jaswant Singh recalled. Powell, meanwhile, kept calling to tell Singh, "Please don't undermine our war in Afghanistan." The pressure fell most heavily on Prime Minister Vajpayee, the final decision-maker, a Hindu nationalist then in his late seventies. Vajpayee is a rotund, laconic man who is also a poet. He can speak very slowly in meetings, sometimes pausing for minutes between sentences, during which he appears to be meditating or napping. He had a difficult history with Musharraf; after a summit meeting in Agra, in July 2001, when the two leaders appeared to be making bold moves toward peace, Vajpayee had felt betrayed, according to his colleagues, by what he saw as Musharraf's arrogance and unreliability as a negotiating partner. Still, as Vajpayee reviewed the January 12th speech, there was some reason to hope that Pakistan's senior generals, too, had been shocked, at least in retrospect, by the ambitions of the Parliament House strike, and that they intended to change their tactics in Kashmir. Within days, Vajpayee told his generals that there would be no attack, at least for now.

Five months later, on May 14, 2002, another suicidal terrorist cell revived the prospect of all-out conflict. A public bus halted before an Army garrison at Kaluchak, eight miles from the Indian city of Jammu, and three young men in Indian Army uniforms alighted. They approached the Army camp's entrance, pulled out weapons, rushed inside, and made their way to a residential area, where they shot dead twenty-two soldiers' wives and children. Later, the attackers were themselves shot to death. In all, during their spree, they killed thirty-four people and injured at least fifty.

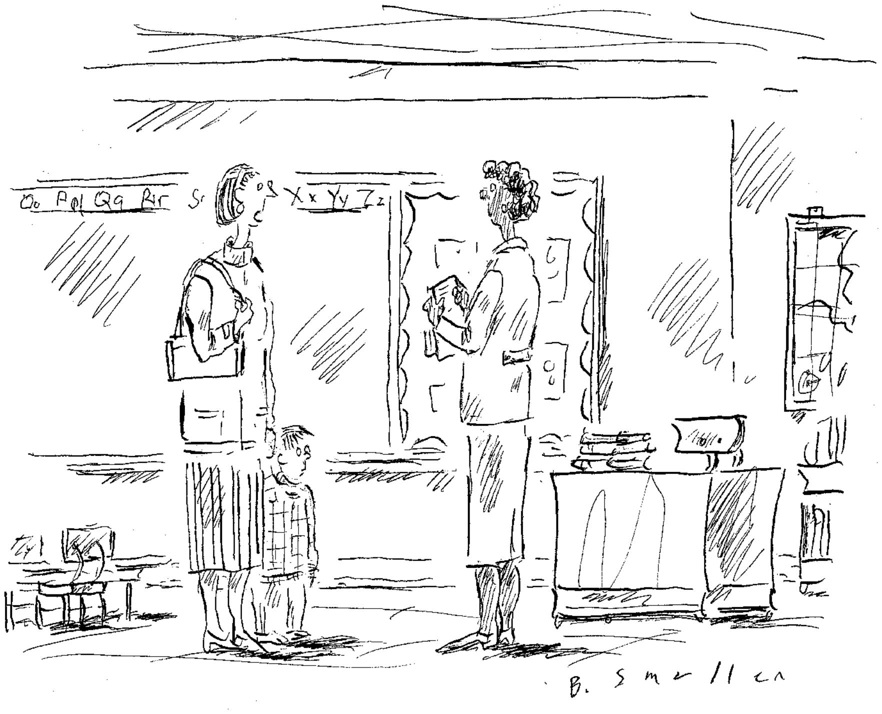
Particularly within the military, the murder of the women and children at the camp was seen as an affront to the Army's honor. The Army chief pressed Vajpayee and his security cabinet for permission to attack Pakistani military targets. "The Army was itching to go across, and it had elaborate plans," Ashok Mehta, a retired Indian general who is writing a book about the crisis, told me. As Armitage recalled it, the Kaluchak massacre "is what triggered for us that this was going very much south. By that time, the messages were hardening on both sides."

This time, India's Cabinet was far less willing to believe the argument that diplomatic pressure on Musharraf could halt Pakistan's support for the jihadists in Kashmir. His follow-up to the January 12th speech struck the Cabinet as weak, if not evidence that the speech had been disingenuous. Musharraf refused to extradite any of the terrorist leaders sought by India, and he allowed Lashkar to continue to operate as a charity, under a new name. Pakistani courts released from prison the leader of Jaish-e-Muhammad, Maulana Masood Azhar—a particularly notorious figure in India because of the role of his supporters in the hijacking of an Indian Airlines jet and the murder of a honeymooning passenger. And, early that spring, jihadi militants began crossing the Line of Control again.

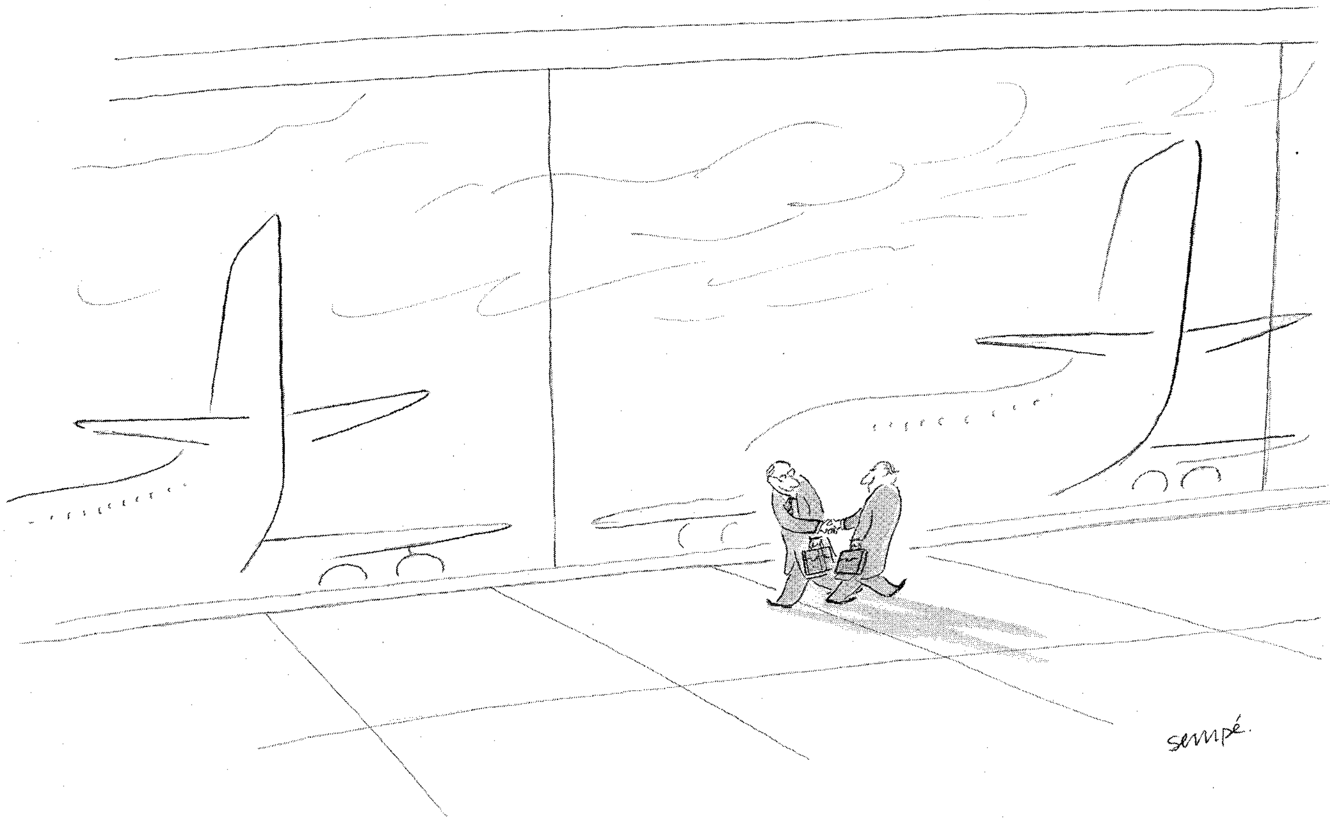
Musharraf and his generals felt that the United States was treating them unfairly after the January 12th speech. As Colonel Smith recalled, the generals would complain, "We are the only ones that you can rely on in order to get these guys in Afghanistan—you can't do it without our help, and we're helping you in every way we can. You're putting tremendous pressure on us, and you're doing nothing on the Indian side."

In late May of 2002, the Indian and Pakistani militaries remained fully mobilized; the tenor of statements in India's press, and information collected through intelligence channels, suggested that an Indian invasion might again be imminent. Ambassador Blackwill met with Vajpayee and gave him a distilled version of his Harvard lectures on the Cuban crisis. At a private lunch in Islamabad on May 25th, Smith asked the Pakistani Army officers at his table about the chance of war; they rated it fifty-fifty. "Sometimes you get so fed up you just want to say, 'Go to hell! Let's go for it!' " one officer declared. That week, Pakistan staged a conspicuous test of its nuclear-capable missiles. "We were compelled to show that we do not bluff," Musharraf later said.

At a round-table discussion in London, a Pakistani general involved with his country's nuclear program discussed the crisis with Indian civilian participants. "They said, 'We can live with losing Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta, but we will wipe out Pakistan,' " the general recalled. "I said, 'That's easier said than done. Losing Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay, it would be very difficult for India to survive.' " Such talk unnerved British and American officials, and in late May Jack Straw, Britain's foreign secretary, called Armitage, asking him to visit Islamabad and New Delhi; he



"It's a lot of pressure on me not to pressure him."



was hoping that a new round of diplomacy might at least slow down India's war planners. Armitage agreed, and he invited analysts from the State Department's intelligence and regional bureaus to his office. He asked for a show of hands: "How many think we're going to war?" Everybody's hand went up but his.

Armitage is a bulky, blunt man who played football during college and then served several Republican Administrations in sensitive national-security posts. He was Colin Powell's most loyal ally in the Bush Administration's internecine conflicts over foreign policy. Armitage told me that he and Powell felt that neither India nor Pakistan really wanted a war, yet they needed the United States to provide a way out. "These were proud leaders who had got themselves out on a limb and needed to find a way back," he said. Blackwill sent Armitage a book of Vajpayee's poems, in the hope that the verses might help him express his message.

Blackwill and his British counterpart in New Delhi, Sir Rob Young, had become so concerned about the risk of a nuclear exchange that they began to discuss plans for an evacuation of embassy personnel. Blackwill and his staff identified about a dozen volunteers, including the Ambassador, who would stay after a war began. Initially, Blackwill's staff investigated whether it might be possible to construct a hardened bunker in the embassy compound, where they might have a chance of surviving a nuclear strike. When they reviewed the likely blast effects, they concluded that they would all certainly be killed, and so they abandoned the idea.

On May 31st, the State Department and the British Foreign Office issued travel warnings to the public. Diplomats and dependents began to leave the British and American embassies—the first time in State Department history that American diplomats had been evacuated because of a fear of nuclear war. Indian officials later accused Britain and the United States of concocting their travel warnings and evacuations as a ploy to shock India's public and rattle the country's stock markets, in the hope of persuading Vajpayee to refrain from military action. Americans involved in the decision insist that they never had such a gambit in mind.

Armitage arrived in Pakistan on June 6th and met with Musharraf for nearly two hours. "These jihadist groups may be seen as serving your interests now," Armitage recalled saying to him, "but eventually they will turn against you." Musharraf insisted that he had meant what he said on January 12th, but his references to jihadi infiltration were carefully articulated in the present tense—"Nothing is happening on the Line of Control" was a preferred phrase, both with Armitage and in public. Armitage felt that this was enough for him to work with. A permanent solution to the problem of jihadi terrorism or insurgency in Kashmir was "a bridge too far," Armitage told me. His objective was to find an immediate formula to prevent war.

In New Delhi, Armitage met with Vajpayee and, separately, with the other members of India's Cabinet Committee on Security. He emphasized the solemnity of Musharraf's promise to Bush, through him, that Pakistan would crack down on the Kashmir jihadis. "I believe him," Armitage told Vajpayee and his colleagues, as he recalled it. According to Mishra, the Indian side interpreted Armitage's remarks as a serious commitment, if not a guarantee. "The impression we had was that Armitage was transmitting a message to us from Musharraf"—about a significant change in Pakistan's Kashmir policy, Mishra said.

Armitage wanted India to take a step that would let Musharraf know that the crisis was easing. After he had dinner with the Indian defense minister, George Fernandes, at Blackwill's residence, the Indians said that they would move some naval vessels away from Pakistan, and Powell called Musharraf to reinforce the message that India was responding. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld scheduled a visit to New Delhi and Islamabad to follow up.

"We almost went" in May, Mishra told me, but Prime Minister Vajpayee, when he faced the final step, concluded that, at the end of a long political career, he wanted to be remembered as a man of peace. For some of Pakistan's generals, Vajpayee's decision seemed to offer a clear lesson: nuclear deterrence works. "Suppose Pakistan had been non-nuclear in 2002," a Pakistani general told me. "There might have been a war. If there's one single lesson I've learned, it's that possession of a nuclear weapon has not been a bad idea."

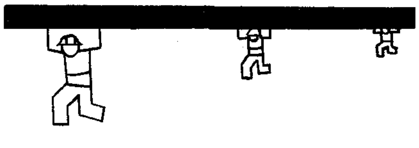
THE BREAKDOWN

The Pakistani military's Strategic Plans Division, the office that oversees the country's nuclear-weapons systems, is headquartered in a colonial-era compound of whitewashed bungalows, rose bushes, and trimmed lawns in the Chaklala garrison, a military base in the northern city of Rawalpindi. The base itself is a small city, filled with scenes of civilian life—gardens and traffic jams and family outings. The division sits across the street from the Joint Staff Headquarters, where a decommissioned Pakistani fighter jet tilts up from the front lawn. Lieutenant-General Khalid Kidwai, a former artillery officer, has commanded Strategic Plans since it was formally established, in 2000. The division's mandate, according to Feroz Khan and other Pakistani generals, was to gain firmer control over a nuclear program that, during its long, secret gestation, had developed somewhat haphazardly. And yet it was the breakdown of control in Pakistan's nuclear establishment that created a terrifying context for the 2001-02 crisis, and the fears have not abated, at least among some members of the Bush Administration, in the few years since the crisis ended.

Strategic Plans had its origin in a covert section of the Pakistani Army's General Headquarters, which was created in the early nineteen-nineties. The department coördinated the Army's nuclear work with that of other government agencies, including the two scientific laboratories that oversaw weapons development, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and a rival facility, the Khan Research Laboratories, which was headed by A. Q. Khan. In the spring of 1999, according to Feroz Khan, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved a reorganization that led to the birth of the Strategic Plans Division as a joint nuclear-combat organization, staffed by officers from the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy. The division was given authority, at least on paper, over all the components of Pakistan's nuclear program.

Each of the division's directorates, including one devoted to security and one to arms-control issues, is commanded by a general who reports to General Kidwai. In the sensitive and sometimes mutually suspicious interactions with the United States over Pakistan's nuclear-weapons program, Kidwai and his senior staff have emerged as important points of contact. When they have met with American delegations, according to people who have attended the meetings, they have typically offered well-organized briefings about what the Pakistani generals described as security-conscious management of nuclear weapons. "Our intent here is to reassure the world that our command and control is safe and under institutional controls," Kidwai said, according to a record of a meeting with visiting Pentagon officials in January, 2001. "There will be no accidents related to our program, no unauthorized use within our program, and no uncontrolled individuals permitted to have access within the program. . . . There are no loose cannons."

As it turned out, Kidwai was mistaken. A. Q. Khan was a national hero, whose largely autonomous laboratory had helped build Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. By early 2001, British and American intelligence officers had discovered that Khan seemed to have accumulated great personal wealth. But the investigation into his activities was still incomplete, and, at this point, a former Bush Administration official told me, "certain parts of his transactions were well understood, certain parts were not"; the intelligence showed what nuclear technology Khan was acquiring, but not very much about who was acquiring it from Khan. "The uncertainties included who else in Pakistan understood what he was doing, and who else was getting his stuff," the official said.



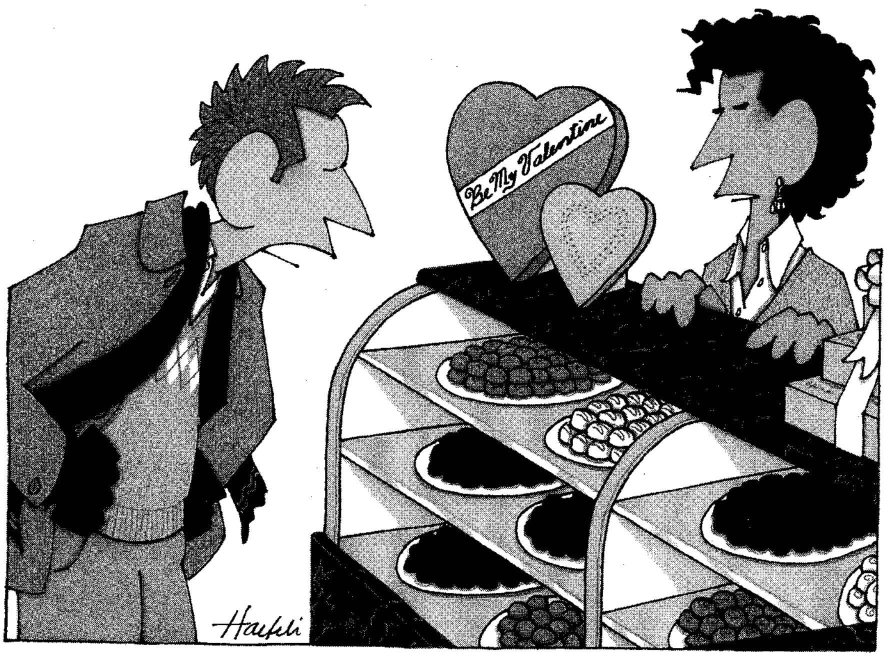
The small circle of American officials who were briefed about Khan in 2001 had to decide whether it would be wiser to continue to monitor his activities, in the hope of learning more about his customers, or to move against his network, with the aim of halting his operations. Bush and his advisers initially decided to let the investigation develop more fully. There was no evidence then or at any later stage that Khan was selling nuclear technology to Al Qaeda. Khan's motives appeared to be rooted in greed, egotism, and nationalism, tinted with a pride in Islam, but he did not seem to share Al Qaeda's radical philosophy of total war against Western governments.

As the United States and its allied militias began to overrun Taliban and Al Qaeda positions in Afghanistan, the C.I.A. and the Pentagon obtained a series of crude drawings from Al Qaeda camps. The drawings were difficult to interpret, but they appeared to have something to do with designs for weapons, possibly with a nuclear aspect. In this same period, the C.I.A. learned that at least two mid-level Pakistani nuclear scientists were involved with a charity that had worked with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The scientists had not been directly employed in the fabrication of nuclear bombs, but they had knowledge that might be useful to someone trying to build a crude device. After being detained by the Pakistani government, at least one of these scientists admitted that he had met with Osama bin Laden, although he insisted that the encounter involved discussions only about charitable works in Afghanistan. Bin Laden had previously declared his interest in acquiring nuclear weapons, and he had encouraged Pakistan to develop a nuclear arsenal, to “terrorize the enemy.” As C.I.A. and Pentagon analysts assessed these fragments of evidence about possible nuclear leakage to Al Qaeda, it was not clear how the pieces fit together, or whether they indicated an imminent threat. Still, few doubted that Al Qaeda intended to use nuclear weapons if it could acquire them.

In late 2001, in Room 208 of the Old Executive Office Building, next door to the White House, an interagency group of nuclear-weapons specialists urgently reviewed the security of Pakistan’s nuclear program. The group, led by Robert Joseph, a senior director at the National Security Council, assessed the entire Pakistani nuclear complex and concluded that the greatest danger of theft or misuse would occur in wartime, or during the mobilization for war. “We hypothesized that the weapons were relatively well guarded until they were put on alert and dispersed,” the former Bush Administration official, who was familiar with the review, told me.

This assessment made the war footing all the more worrisome, since every division of Pakistan’s military had been put on alert. There were reports—at times contradictory—about how far Pakistan had gone in actually preparing its nuclear weapons for possible use. Pakistani generals told me that they had taken no significant steps. Given the gamesmanship between India and Pakistan, though, it is difficult to know how much preparation might have occurred on either side.

At the same time, the National Security Council’s interagency group was debating whether the United States could legally offer Pakistan equipment that might make its nuclear weapons less vulnerable to theft or unauthorized use. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty first took effect in 1970, and it names the United States, the Soviet Union (later Russia), China, Britain, and France as the only authorized nuclear-weapons states. The treaty holds that all other nuclear aspirants are illegitimate; its principles have been enacted into a series of American laws. The interagency group, in assessing its options with Pakistan, talked with lawyers from several U.S. government departments, and it ultimately concluded that America could legally offer Pakistan’s Strategic Plans Division access to nuclear-security items such as radiation-suppressing Kevlar blankets, high-grade fencing, and surveillance radars, because these items might have multiple uses, but could offer no equipment that would be solely for nuclear-weapons use, such as the bomb locks known as Permissive Action Links. Colin Powell first raised the possibility of American assistance with Musharraf in the autumn of 2001, but Musharraf rejected the idea; the Pakistani side “just said no,” the former Bush Administration official recalled. The Pakistanis said they “had it all under control themselves.”



“I need a box of the gayest chocolate you’ve got.”

Many of Pakistan’s ruling generals fear that, given an opportunity, the United States might stand by as India attempted to preëmptively destroy Pakistan’s nuclear-weapons facilities. In the view of Musharraf and his senior generals, Feroz Khan told me, “the United States is not hostile to Pakistan, but they do know that the U.S. was inimical to the Pakistani program from the beginning, so they would not assume any sympathy” if India attacked. Pakistan’s military has gone to great lengths to keep the operational details of its nuclear-weapons systems secret, several well-placed American officials told me. To accept U.S. nuclear-security assistance, the generals would have to be convinced that the aid would not be used to collect intelligence or undermine Pakistan’s control of its nuclear arsenal.

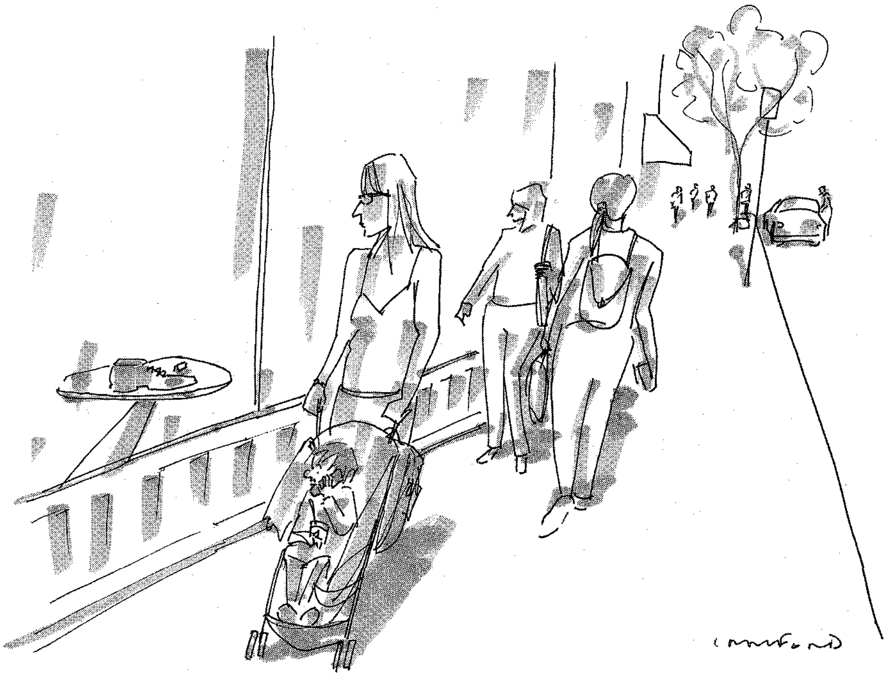
Late in 2002, after the threat of a major war between India and Pakistan receded, investigations into A. Q. Khan’s rogue nuclear sales produced a series of breakthroughs. It became clear that Khan was selling nuclear knowledge and technology to the governments of Iran and Libya. Toward the end of 2003, the United States revealed its dossier on Khan to Musharraf. The Pakistani government arrested Khan, but Musharraf quickly pardoned him, praising his service to the country. However, the public disclosure of Khan’s activities—some of which occurred after his laboratory had been placed under the supervision of the Strategic Plans Division, in early 2001—gave the Bush Administration an opportunity to renew discussions with Pakistan about its nuclear security.

Last fall, several Pakistani generals familiar with the country’s nuclear-weapons program agreed to be interviewed, on the condition that they not be further identified. They emphasized that, since Khan’s arrest, the Strategic Plans Division has tightened supervision of the country’s nuclear scientists and workers. “The central theme of our doctrine is restraint and responsibility,” a general told me. “This capability is for Pakistan’s sovereignty alone and we will not share it with any outside states or others." Previously, he said, the security procedures of the country's main scientific laboratories and civilian-led fissile-material plants rested "with the head of the organization." He added, "A. Q. Khan betrayed that trust. That's where we went wrong."

In the reformed system, the Strategic Plans Division is in charge of all security procedures, and the total manpower of its security directorate has been expanded to about eight thousand people, mainly active and retired military personnel. The general also said that Pakistan has developed its own nuclear-bomb locks, using codes derived from complex combinations of letters and numbers. (American specialists later told me that these locks, as far as they could tell, would likely make it more difficult, but not necessarily impossible, for a terrorist to make use of a stolen Pakistani weapon.) As for control over the weapons during mobilization for war, "there is a command-and-control system that goes right down to the pilot or missile battery," the Pakistani general said. "In this, the famous two-man rule is followed, and there are places where a three-man rule is followed"—that is, no single Pakistani officer can authorize the use of nuclear weapons or their delivery systems.

Since Khan's exposure, some advocates of nuclear disarmament in South Asia have argued during internal Bush Administration debates that providing security equipment for Pakistan's nuclear weapons would only make it more difficult to persuade Pakistan to give up its nuclear arms. According to Feroz Khan, Pakistan's generals "would want American technical assistance as long as it does not compromise their weapons designs or their management capabilities."

In March, President Bush will visit Pakistan and India for the first time. In New Delhi, his main purpose, according to officials involved in planning the trip, will be to demonstrate his commitment to the emerging economic and diplomatic partnership between the United States and India. Last July, the Administration signed a preliminary agreement to supply technology for nuclear power plants, which the Indian government says are needed to help address the country's energy shortages. Although the power plants would be under international nonproliferation safeguards, the offer, which requires congressional approval, is a break with precedent, one that some nonproliferation advocates regard as an endorsement of India as a legitimate nuclear-weapons state. Late last month, the current Ambassador to India, David C. Mulford, warned that, unless India supported efforts to censure Iran over its nuclear program, Congress might reject the deal. Bush has praised the agreement as evidence of a new, more trusting American commitment to India that will bring economic benefits to both sides without increasing the danger of nuclear war.


"I'm in the Maclaren, where are you?"

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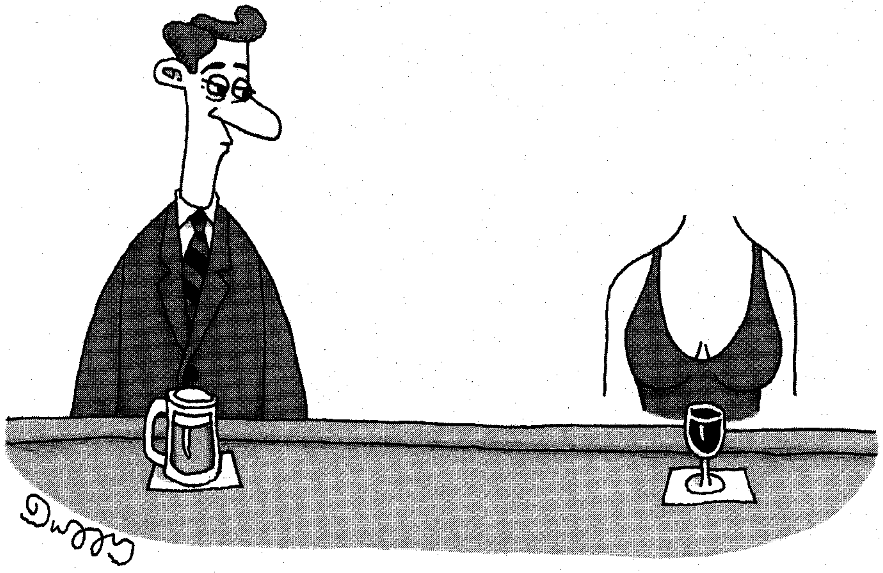
Since late 2002, the governments of India and Pakistan have reached a number of modest agreements, such as the establishment of bus service between the two countries. A series of cricket matches between the national teams has created particular public excitement. In both India and Pakistan, officials told me that they hoped that this preliminary détente would be reinforced by public opinion. Yet the causes of the 2001-02 crisis—jihadi terrorism, mutual suspicion, and a relatively young and unstable system of nuclear deterrence between the countries—have not disappeared. If anything, the pace of terrorist attacks has recently quickened.

On July 5th, a jeep loaded with explosives rammed into a security fence surrounding a Hindu temple in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya; five attackers then ran through the breach. Security guards killed them before they could enter the temple, which they apparently intended to destroy. A regional police chief said that the attackers belonged to Lashkar-e-Taiba. The temple is an especially sensitive site, because it was erected after Hindu-nationalist cadres destroyed a mosque in the area in 1992, setting off widespread religious riots that claimed as many as three thousand lives.

On the evening of October 29th, just before a major Hindu festival, sixty shoppers in two crowded markets in New Delhi died when bombs hidden in small satchels detonated at the height of the holiday rush. Within days, Indian police had arrested Tariq Ahmed Dar, a Kashmiri travelling salesman with a pharmaceutical company, and said that he had been involved in organizing the attack. K. K. Paul, the commissioner of police in New Delhi, who is leading the investigation, told me that Dar "received a lot of money" from sources in the Middle East, particularly from the Persian Gulf, and



MALE-PATTERN BLINDNESS

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that the explosives appeared to be of military origin. Discussing the New Delhi attacks, Paul said, "There is substantial evidence to show that it is indeed Lashkar," and that that group receives direct support from "a foreign government." Paul would not name the government, but other Indian officials, who asked not to be identified, believe that Pakistan bears responsibility. Then, in late December, a gunman attacked a scientific conference in Bangalore, the center of India's booming information-technology industry, killing one leading Indian scientist and wounding five others. A senior Indian official said that the evidence "suggests the Pakistani Army is still involved."

In Pakistan, the generals I interviewed dismissed such accusations. Musharraf has asked India to provide his government with leads on the October 29th bombings, and has pledged to coöperate in any investigation. Indian officials, though, do not trust Musharraf's government to help conduct a reliable investigation. Americans who monitor intelligence about terrorism on the subcontinent agree that Musharraf has not taken definitive steps to halt aid to jihadi groups, and that infiltration by militants into India has not ended. In an interview with Lally Weymouth, published last month in the Washington *Post*, Musharraf described the jihadists striking India as "independent groups acting without any guidance or support from anyone, following their own agendas."

If Pakistan is continuing to support jihadists, its generals may feel that they have new reasons to stoke insurgent violence in India, believing that India has increased covert support for insurgent groups in Pakistan, such as the violent separatists in Baluchistan. In interviews, several Indian strategists close to the government openly advocated support for such groups as a fitting response to the Pakistani Army's aid to jihadi groups.

To some extent, the jihadists seem to have developed their own nuclear-weapons doctrine, based not on the acquisition of nuclear devices, the scenario most commonly feared in the United States, but on carrying out spectacular strikes in India—attacks that might draw India and Pakistan into a major war. Judging by the occasional public statements of their leaders and their strident Web sites, groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad contain at least some members who both oppose the Musharraf government and seek India's destruction. Pakistani officials have said that a breakaway faction of Jaish-e-Muhammad, along with some dissident members of the Pakistani military, participated in at least one of the two assassination attempts made against Musharraf since 2003. Lashkar-e-Taiba has been more coöperative with Musharraf's government, but when I spoke with two former Lashkar military commanders, last autumn, they told me that many younger volunteers regard Musharraf as an apostate. These volunteers, the former Lashkar commanders said, also hope that attacks in India's heartland will ultimately destroy the regional peace process.

This involvement by jihadists is "something new, in comparison to the forties, fifties, and sixties," Stephen P. Cohen, an American scholar of South Asia and nuclear-deterrence theory, says. Richard Armitage believes that there is "a large possibility" that jihadi groups want to set off a war on the subcontinent, because "it would serve the interests of these groups to have a conflict." At least as worrisome is the prospect that this sort of nuclear equation may spread to the Middle East, where Iran may acquire nuclear arms and a neighbor such as Saudi Arabia or Syria or Egypt might then do the same, and where one might easily imagine the emergence of collaborations between stateless terrorist or religious groups and insecure, dissent-ridden, nuclear-armed governments.

For those governments which feel particularly vulnerable to catastrophic jihadi terrorism—the United States, India, Russia, and Israel, among others—the 2001-02 nuclear crisis and its unstable aftermath can look like the sort of thing that used to be found only in thrillers. The growth of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal (now estimated at as many as a hundred weapons; India is thought to have about the same number), doubts about the arsenal's management, and the continuing problem of jihadi terrorism, appear deeply threatening. The rising strength of remnant Al Qaeda and Taliban cadres along the Afghan border is equally unsettling.

Nor is it clear that India and Pakistan have learned the right lessons. The Indian military is now advocating a new doctrine of "cold start" for the country's armored divisions along the Pakistan border, an approach that would allow India to strike offensively—and immediately—after a terrorist provocation. The purpose, Indian military strategists say, would be to avoid the extended period of mobilization for war that allows American and British diplomats to intervene and negotiate for restraint.

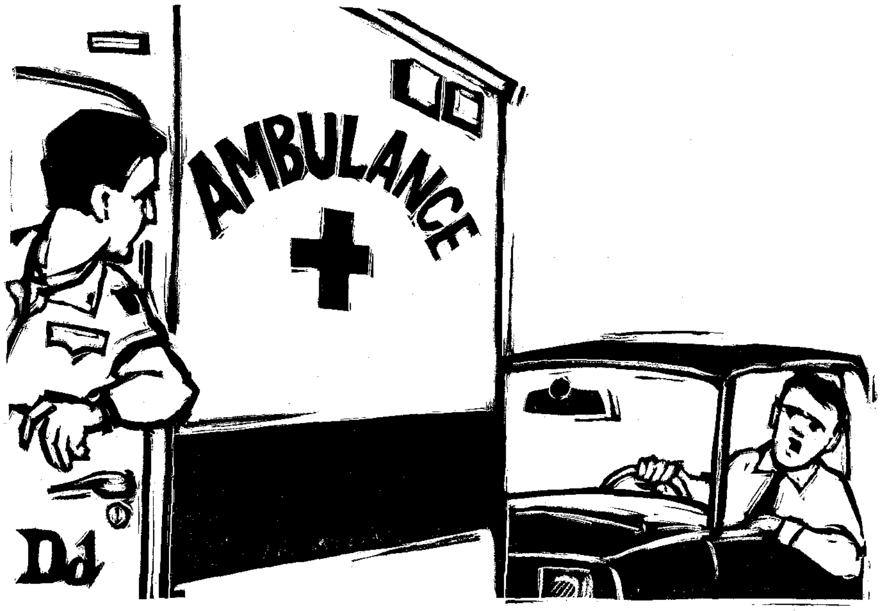
Still, some Indian and Pakistani military officers and civilian officials I spoke to say that the 2001-02 war scare was their Cuban missile crisis—a confrontation that came so close to catastrophe that it shocked both sides into a new approach to nuclear deterrence, one that is grounded in military restraint, political patience, and negotiations about underlying grievances. "There has been a tacit decision" to react defensively and by nonmilitary means in the face of continuing jihadi terrorist strikes, Manoj Joshi, a member of India's National Security Council Advisory Board, told me. "We'll take what they can throw across. That remains the thrust of Indian policy." A senior Indian official said, "I think what you have to do is cope with terrorism as best you can, knowing that there is always going to be one that comes through. I think that is something that we have to live with, and cope with using our own resources."

The difficulty with that approach, the official continued, is India's democracy, which is open, noisy, and competitive; public outrage after a jihadi terrorist attack might force any government to mobilize for war, as the United States did after September 11th. "There is a threshold of violence that may tip things to the other side," the senior official said. For example, if the death toll in the October 29th market bombings in New Delhi had been "five hundred, rather than fifty, it would have tipped to the other side. We try to emphasize this to our American friends."

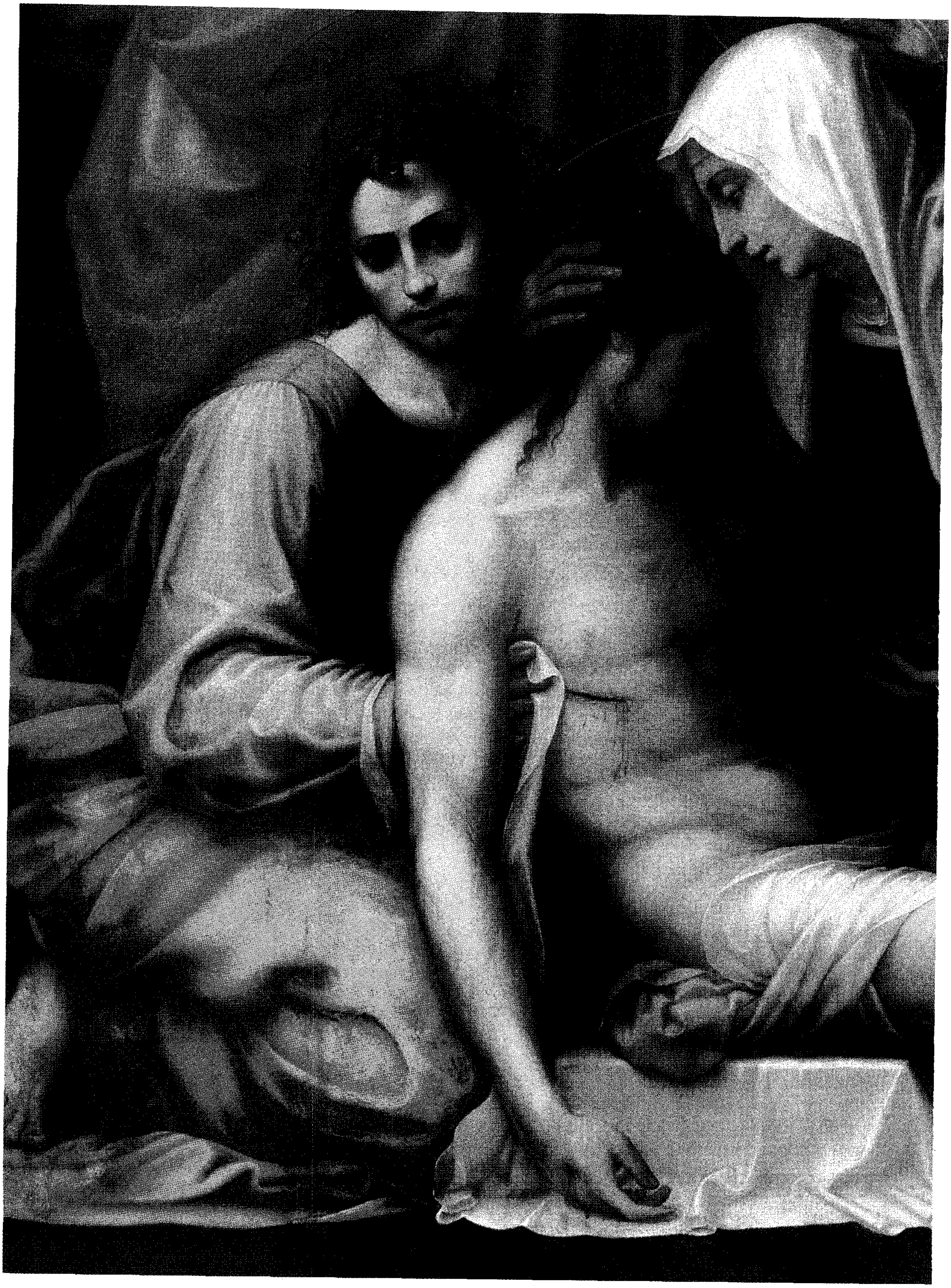
If India and Pakistan face another crisis (and even a cursory reading of their history suggests that this is likely), they will make their choices with diminished trust in the United States as a mediator. The Bush Administration's embrace of India, symbolized by its offer of nuclear coöperation, has left Pakistan's generals with "an absolute certainty that the U.S. is not an honest broker," a U.S. Defense Department official who has recently talked extensively with Pakistan's generals said. Indeed, in the next crisis Pakistan's generals will assume that any steps toward war by India will be taken "with the involvement of the United States." At the same time, many Indian officials believe that the United States did not push Musharraf hard enough to end support for jihadi groups in Kashmir. For his part, Armitage said that he never promised an end to all Pakistani aid to Kashmiri groups, and that American pressure had reduced Musharraf's covert support. "Did the infiltration stop? No. Did it lower? Yes, it did. Did aid to the separatist groups in Kashmir decline? Yes. Did it stop? No. But I would say to them, three years afterward, look where we are—I think we're demonstrably quite better off."

One recent evening, I visited Jaswant Singh in his airy office inside Parliament House, just down the hall from where he escaped the December 13th assault. The former foreign minister is now the leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house. (Singh's party was voted out of office in May of 2004. The current government is a coalition led by the secular Congress Party.) Singh said that a lesson he had taken away from 2002 was: "Hereafter, I really will never ask the United States for anything as far as Pakistan is concerned." And during a crisis, he added, "obviously now I won't even send messages" through the United States to Pakistan.

Singh is a thoughtful man and a prolific writer; in conversation, he can digress into historical narratives or stir himself into oratory. Reflecting on the relationship between the post-September 11th United States and post-December 13th India, Singh concluded that India must try to develop its own model for a campaign against terrorism. "Your experience has led you to an excessive militarization," he said. "I'm not sure that is the answer." The United States is a relatively young society, he observed; India has been coping with religious and sectarian violence, some of it quite terrible, for more than a thousand years. As he continued, Singh became emotional. "I must go down my path undeterred, containing whatever comes at one, in whatever forms of terrorism," he said. "The absolutely unconquerable attribute of this land is its unmatched resilience. I don't say this out of arrogance. But India absorbs—and absorbs simultaneously—so many shocks, and it goes on. Unperturbed? No, not unperturbed—at times troubled, and sometimes angry." ♦



"I'm not a lawyer. I'm just drafting."

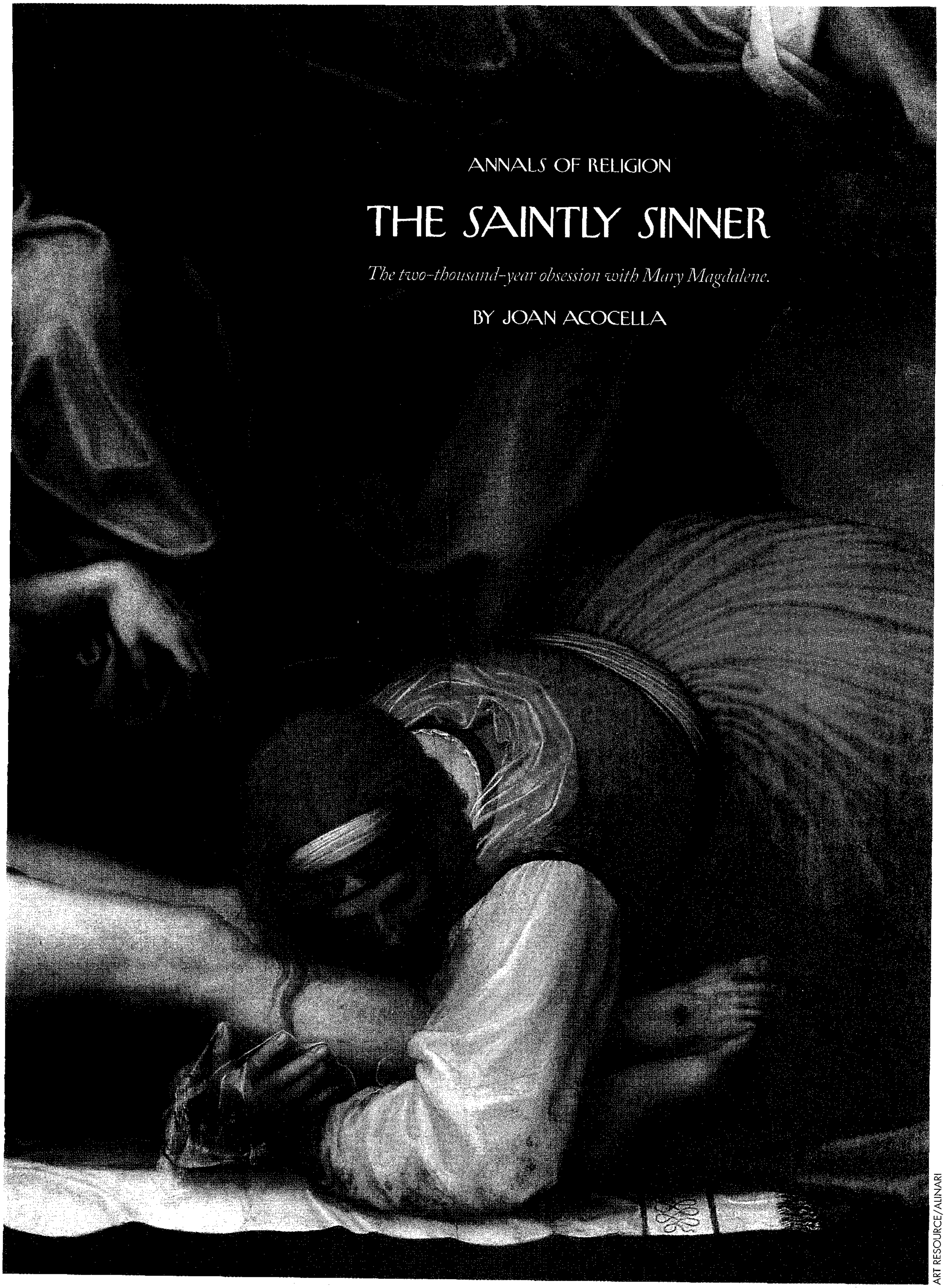


ANNALS OF RELIGION

THE SAINTLY SINNER

The two-thousand-year obsession with Mary Magdalene.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA



ART RESOURCE/ALINARI

The Catholic Church presumably has enough on its hands right now without worrying about popular fiction, but the Holy See cannot have failed to notice that Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code," a novel claiming that Jesus was married, has been on the *Times* best-seller list for almost three years. (Its message will soon spread more widely: the paperback is due out next month, and the movie version will be released in May.) Brown is by no means the first to have suggested that Christ had a sex life—Martin Luther said it—but the most notorious recent statement of the theory was a 1982 book, "Holy Blood, Holy Grail," by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln. "Holy Blood," which was one of the main sources for "The Da Vinci Code," proposes that after the Crucifixion Jesus' wife, with at least one of their children, escaped to France, where their descendants married into the Merovingian dynasty and are still around today. Nobody knows this, though, because, according to the authors' scenario, the truth has been kept under wraps for a thousand years by a secret society called the Priory of Sion. The book offers a fantastically elaborated conspiracy theory—involving Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and Jean Cocteau (all "grand masters" of the Priory of Sion), plus Emma Calvé and various others—that cannot be briefly summarized, but the upshot is that the Priory may now be ready to go public with its story. The authors warn that the organization may intend to set up a theocratic United States of Europe, with a descendant of Jesus as its priest-king but with the actual business of government being handled by some other party—the Priory of Sion, for example.

And who is the woman who caused all this trouble? Who married Jesus and bore his offspring and thereby laid the foundation for the overthrow of post-Enlightenment culture? Mary Magdalene.

Mary Magdalene gets only fourteen mentions in the New Testament. Luke and Mark describe her as the subject of one of Jesus' exorcisms—he cast "seven devils" out of her—and as one of several women who followed him. In all four Gospels, she is present at the Crucifixion. Nevertheless, her role remains minuscule, until, all of a sudden, after Christ's death, it becomes hugely magnified. Each of the Gospels tells the story a little differently, but, basically, the Magdalene, either alone or with other women, goes to the tomb on the third day to anoint Jesus' body, and it is to her (or them) that an angel or Christ himself announces that he is risen from the dead, and instructs her to go tell this to his disciples. That command gave the Magdalene a completely new standing. The Resurrection is the proof of the truth of Christian faith. As the first person to announce it, Mary Magdalene became, as she was later designated, "the apostle to the apostles."

But there was a problem. Why her? Why a person who previously had been referred to only in passing? Above all, why a woman?

The fact that all four Gospels say that the Magdalene was the one strongly suggests that this indeed is what people said had happened. If so, however, she needed to be improved upon. That was easy enough. Today, with so many Biblical literalists around, we have to fuss about what Scripture actually says, but in the early centuries after Christ's death such questions were less important, because most people couldn't read. The four Gospels, for the most part, are collections of oral traditions. Once they were written down, they served as a guide for preaching, but only as a guide. Preachers embroidered upon them freely, and artists—indeed, everyone—made their own adjustments. The English scholar Marina Warner makes this point in her book on the Virgin Mary, "Alone of All Her Sex" (1976). As Warner shows, many of the details of the Nativity so familiar to us from paintings and hymns and school pageants—"the hay and the snow and the smell of animals' warm bodies"—are not in the New Testament. People made them up; they wanted a better story. Likewise, they made up a better Mary Magdalene.

Jesus, for his time and place, was notably unsexist. In Samaria, when he talked with the woman at the well—this is the longest personal exchange he has with anyone in the Bible—his disciples "marvelled"; a Jewish man did not, in public, speak to a woman unrelated to him. In another episode, in Luke, Jesus is dining with Simon the Pharisee when a "woman in the city," a "sinner"—presumably a prostitute—enters the house, washes Jesus' feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, kisses them, and then anoints them with balm from a jar. Simon says to Christ that if he can accept that tribute from such a person then he is surely not a prophet. Christ answers that the "sinner" has shown him more love than Simon has.

According to some scholars, Christ's equanimity regarding gender was honored in some early Christian communities, where women served as leaders. But by the second century, as the so-called "orthodox Church" consolidated itself, the women were being shunted aside, along with the thing that they were increasingly seen to stand for: sex. It was not until the twelfth century that all Roman Catholic priests were absolutely required to be celibate, but the call for celibacy began sounding long before, and the writings of the Church fathers were very tough on sex. By the fourth century, Christ's mother was declared a virgin. Chastity became the ideal; women, the incitement to unchastity, were stigmatized.

How, then, could the Resurrection announcement have been made to one of that party? In what seems, in retrospect, an ingenious solution, Luke's "sinner" was said to be the Magdalene. This made a kind of sense. Luke first introduces the Magdalene by name only two verses after the story of the "sinner." Then, there were the "seven devils" that Christ cast out of the Magdalene. What devils would a woman have besides concupiscence? Finally, unlike many other females in the Gospels—Mary the mother of James, Mary the wife of Cleophas, etc.—Mary Magdalene, when she is named, is identified not by a relationship with a man but by her city, Magdala, a prosperous fishing village on the Sea of Galilee. Thus the Magdalene was probably a woman who lived on her own, a rare and suspect thing in Jewish society of the period. Add to that the fact that Magdala had a reputation as a licentious city, and that the Magdalene apparently had money

Previous page: a detail from Fra Bartolommeo's "Pietà" (1511-12). The Magdalene cradles Christ's feet.

(Luke says that she ministered to Jesus out of her "substance"), and we arrive at the conclusion: Mary Magdalene was the sinner who washed Christ's feet with her tears.

One wonders, at first, how it would help the Church's new chastity campaign for the first witness of the Resurrection to be a prostitute. But, as noted, the Church was pretty much stuck with the Magdalene. Furthermore, the keynote of Jesus' ministry was humility. A god who chose to be born in a stable might also decide to announce his Resurrection to a prostitute. And Luke's sinner was not just a prostitute; she was a repentant prostitute, shedding tears so copious that they sufficed to clean the feet of a man who had just walked the dusty road to the Pharisee's house. But the crucial gain of grafting this woman onto the Magdalene was that it gave the Magdalene some fullness as a character while also lowering her standing. The conflation was already being made by the third or fourth century, and in the sixth century it was ratified in a sermon by Pope Gregory the Great. Mary Magdalene, one of the few independent women in the New Testament, became a whore.

As such, she was a tremendous success. Europe, once it was converted to Christianity, was not content to have all those holy people in the Bible confine their activities—or, more important, their relics—to the Middle East. And so the Magdalene, among others, was sent west. After the Crucifixion, it was said, infidels placed her in a rudderless boat and pushed it out to sea, in full confidence that it would capsize. But, piloted by the hand of God, the Magdalene's bark arrived at Marseilles, whereupon she undertook a career of strenuous evangelism and converted southern Gaul. Eventually, however, she tired of preaching and retreated to a cave in a mountain near Marseilles, where she wept and repented her foul youth. She wore no clothes; she was covered only by her long hair (or, in some paintings, by an appalling sort of fur). Nor did she take any food. Once a day, angels would descend to carry her to Heaven, where she received "heavenly sustenance," and then fly her back to her grotto. This went on for thirty years. Then, one day, her friend Maximin, the bishop of Aix, found her in his church levitating two cubits above the floor and surrounded by a choir of angels. She promptly expired.

This is a summary of various stories, but most of them can be found in "The Golden Legend," a collection of saints' lives written by a thirteenth-century Dominican, Jacobus de Voragine, who later became the archbishop of Genoa. After the Bible, "The Golden Legend" is said to have been the most widely read text of the Middle Ages. On its basis, sermons were composed, plays written, altarpieces painted, stories told by the hearth fire. The Magdalene, according to some sources, became France's most popular saint after the Virgin Mary. In the eleventh century, an especially fervent Magdalene cult grew up in the Burgundian town of Vézelay, whose church claimed to have her relics—an assertion undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Vézelay was on one of the main routes to Santiago de Compostela, in Spain, Christendom's third most important pilgrimage site (after Jerusalem and Rome). Vézelay soon became another important pilgrimage site, substantially benefitting the local economy. In 1267, the monks of Vézelay had the Magdalene's relics dug up from beneath the church—an event attended by the King.

Some people, though, wondered how the Magdalene's body got to Burgundy, when the legend said that she had died in Provence. The Provençal Prince Charles of Salerno, a devout man, was especially pained by this relocation. And so in 1279, only twelve years after the Vézelay exhumation, a new set of Magdalene relics was discovered, in the crypt of St. Maximin, near Aix-en-Provence. St. Maximin became a competing pilgrimage site. As time passed, five whole bodies of the Magdalene, together with spare parts, were discovered in various locales. Her saint's day, July 22nd, became a major holiday. In Viviers, it was said, a peasant who dared to plow his fields on that day was struck by lightning. Numerous professions—winegrowers, gardeners, sailors, barrelmakers, weavers—took her as their patron saint. Church after church was named after her, as were many baby girls.

How did she become such a favorite? In recent years, there have been a number of so-called "reception studies" of the Magdalene, histories of how her image

Victoria Roberts

"There's no hot line for ennui, Harold."

"Vanessa has done a not bad de Kooning."

changed over time. Two good examples are Susan Haskins's "Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor" (1993) and Katherine Jansen's "The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages" (2001). According to these writers, it was partly because urbanization in the twelfth century caused a rise in prostitution that the Magdalene, that well-known whore, became so prominent at this time. Preachers stressed—indeed, invented—her wayward youth. She was beautiful, they said, with masses of red-gold hair, and she was an heiress; she lived in a castle. But she had no male relative to arrange a suitable marriage for her, and so she abandoned herself to *luxuria*, or lust. Day by day, she sat at her mirror, applying cosmetics and perfumes, the better to ensnare innocent young men. Soon, according to the medieval preachers (who apparently regarded wealth as no deterrent to prostitution), she began to sell her body—a lesson, they declared, to all young women tempted by *luxuria*. Jansen quotes a thirteenth-century friar who put himself in the mind of such a girl, sitting before her looking glass: "She pulls her dress to one side to reveal bare skin, loosens her sash to reveal her cleavage. Her body is still home, but in God's eyes she is already in a brothel." Preaching was only part of the campaign. All across Europe, institutions were set up, under the aegis of Mary Magdalene, for prostitutes willing to repent their ways.

While she was being held up as a warning, however, the young Magdalene was also an object of admiration. She was chosen as the patron saint not just of barrelmakers and gardeners but also of glovemakers, perfume manufacturers, and hairdressers—in other words, the purveyors of all those fripperies which led her to her fall. (She also became the patroness of prostitutes. In Beaucaire, on her saint's day, the local whores ran a race in her honor.) Apart from her beauty, what appealed to people was her reputed emotionalism. In medieval representations of the Crucifixion and the Deposition, the Magdalene typically appears mad with grief. Often, her mouth is open; she is screaming. Her hair flies; her cloak flies. She kisses Christ's bleeding feet. She knows that it is for her sins, too, that Christ has died. Compared with her, the Virgin is usually far more composed. The period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries was the high tide of the worship of the Virgin Mary. According to Marina Warner, all the human failings that were removed from the Virgin were displaced onto the Magdalene, and each cult grew thereby. But, when it came to guilt over one's trespasses, the Magdalene, not the stainless Virgin, was the saint people needed. As Haskins puts it, she was "a model for mere mortals who could sin and sin again, and yet through repentance still hope to reach heaven."

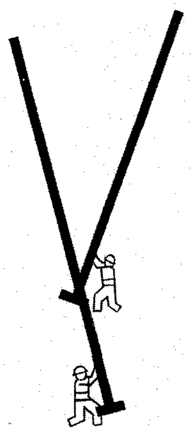
This shifting image of the Magdalene—sometimes a pinup, sometimes a sermon—stabilized in the Renaissance. As the great scholar Mario Praz put it, she became a "Venus in sackcloth." In a painting by Titian from 1530-35, we see her, in her grotto, gazing up to Heaven. At the same time, between the strands of her flowing hair, we see the pearly breasts that in her life—as in all lives, Titian is saying, complicitly—were the cause of sin. But the equipoise held only briefly. In the sixteenth century came the Protestants' challenge to the sacrament of penance, which, through the sale of indulgences, had been so abused by the Church. The Counter-Reformation therefore placed strong emphasis on penance, and as part of that cleanup campaign we get notably chaste images of the Magdalene, such as Georges de La Tour's famous series, with the pious saint now fully clothed and with a skull by her side—a reminder of how beauty ends up. The Magdalene also figured heavily in the devotional poetry of the English seventeenth century. Richard Crashaw's "Saint Mary Magdalene, or The Weeper" (1646) pictures Christ "followed by two faithful fountains"—the Magdalene's two eyes—"two walking baths; two weeping motions; / Portable, and compendious oceans." This poem, together with other, like-minded representations, was sufficient to establish the word "maudlin," a derivative of Magdalene, in the English language, with the meaning of "mawkishly lachrymose."

With the Enlightenment, Mary Magdalene, like other holy matters, suffered some neglect. But in nineteenth-century England she was again invoked by reformers, for prostitution was epidemic in Victorian London. More convents were established for rescued prostitutes in the Magdalene's name. (Actually, as Haskins explains, they were halfway houses, where the girls did needlework while awaiting a modest marriage or a job in a shop.) The very word "magdalen" was widely used to mean "fallen woman." At the end of the century, a great wave of prurience broke over European art; in that, too, the Magdalene had a place, and not in a devotional guise. In some paintings, she appears buck naked—full body, frontal—without even the pseudo cover of her hair. She appealed also to the "black Symbolism" of the time. In an 1888 engraving by the Belgian Symbolist Félicien Rops, she crumples over, without a stitch on, at the foot of the Cross, as she embraces Christ's feet.

In the twentieth century, the Magdalene received more exalted tributes. Rainer Maria Rilke, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Boris Pasternak all devoted beautiful poems to her. They are love poems, about her relationship with Christ, but they are grave and nuanced. Popular representations of the Magdalene in our time have been less subtle. Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical "Jesus Christ Superstar" portrayed her frankly as a whore, in love with Jesus. In Franco Zeffirelli's 1977 TV movie "Jesus of Nazareth," we first see the Magdalene as she is finishing up with a client. In Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988), based on Nikos Kazantzákis's novel, the Magdalene becomes a prostitute only because Jesus, her childhood companion, rejected her sexually. Not that he wanted to. Later, on the Cross, he is assailed by a fantasy (vividly filmed) of bedding her and conceiving a child. Apparently, this is too much for her; she dies. So, after his fantasy, does Jesus. Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" uses the Magdalene only as a weeper at the Crucifixion, but it is a rare case.

In fact, Gibson's film is the only one in this catalogue that conforms to current Church doctrine. In the nineteen-sixties, the Church finally caught up with some of the more fantastic of the saints' lives, and in 1969 the liturgical calendar was revised. A number of long-honored saints' days were dropped, for lack of evidence that the saint in question had ever existed. (That included St. Christopher, to the grief of many people still wearing his medal.) Other saints had their entries rewritten, and the Magdalene's was one. She was no longer a prostitute, the Church said, and the Song of Songs, that sexy poem, was no longer to be read on her saint's day. As the film record demonstrates, some people wanted no part of this cleaned-up Magdalene. Others began asking how she got sullied in the first place.

The crucial development in Magdalene scholarship was the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library. Biblical scholars had understood for a long time that the orthodox Church was just the segment of the Church that won out over competing Christian sects, notably the so-called Gnostics. But, apart from what could be gathered from the Church fathers' denunciations of these supposed heretics, students of early Christianity knew little about them. Then, one day in December of 1945, an Arab peasant named Muhammad Ali al-Samman drove his camel to the foothills near the town of Nag Hammadi, in Upper Egypt, to collect fertilizer for his fields, and as he dug he unearthed a clay jar about three feet high. Hoping that it might contain treasure, he broke it open and, to his disappointment, found only a bunch of papyrus books, bound in leather. He took the books home and tossed them in a courtyard where he kept his animals. In the weeks that followed, his mother used some pages from the books to light her stove; other pages were bartered for cigarettes and fruit. But eventually, after a long journey through the hands of antiquities dealers, black marketers, smugglers, and scholars, Samman's find was recognized as a priceless library of Gnostic writings—thirteen codices, containing fifty-two texts—recorded in Coptic (an early form of Egyptian) in the fourth century but translated from Greek originals dating from between the second and fourth centuries. In time, the books were confiscated by the Egyptian government and moved to the Coptic Museum in Cairo, where they remain today. (They were published in 1972-77.) Actually, they were not the first Gnostic texts to be discovered. Others had come to light in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but most of them were not published until after the time of the Nag Hammadi discovery.



Anyone who wants to know the full, surprising contents of the Gnostic Gospels—with a Demiurge (not God) creating the universe, and the story of the Fall told from the point of view of the serpent, a friend to mankind—should consult Elaine Pagels's classic "The Gnostic Gospels" (1979) or Marvin Meyer's "The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library" (HarperSanFrancisco; $21.95), which was published last fall. Meyer is more descriptive, Pagels more analytic. What is important for this story is that Mary Magdalene is a central figure in the Gnostic Gospels and, compared with her European legend, an utterly new character. Not only is she not a prostitute; she is an evangelical hero and Christ's favorite disciple.

The key text is the Gospel of Mary. As the treatise opens, the Risen Christ is preaching to his disciples. There is no such thing as sin, he says. Also, the disciples, in their quest for the divine, should follow no authorities, heed no rules, but simply look within themselves. Having delivered these lessons, Jesus departs, leaving his disciples quaking with fear. No sin? No rules? If they teach these doctrines, they may end up getting killed, like him. At that point, Mary Magdalene takes over. "Do not weep or grieve or be in doubt," she tells the others. (This and the following quotations from the Gnostic texts are Meyer's translations.) Peter then says to the Magdalene that they all know Jesus loved her more than any other woman, and he asks her if there is anything that she learned privately from the Saviour. The Magdalene responds by describing a vision she had of the soul's ascent to truth—a story she shared with Jesus. (She adds his comments.) Four pages are missing from this passage, and some readers may not regret their loss. Accounts of Gnostic visions are sometimes like people's descriptions of their dreams: bizarre yet boring—and long. The Magdalene's story seems to have struck her audience that way. "Did he [Jesus] really speak with a woman in private, without our knowledge?" Peter now asks his brothers. "Should we all turn and listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?" Mary bursts into tears and asks Peter if he thinks she's lying. Another disciple, Levi, interrupts: "Peter, you always are angry.... If the Savior made her worthy, who are you to reject her?"

This text exemplifies the principle for

which Gnosticism was named. In Greek, *gnosis* means "knowledge." To the Gnostic communities, it meant a kind of spiritual understanding—the goal of all believers—that was achieved only through intense self-examination, typically accompanied by visions. The Gospel of Mary shows the Magdalene as an expert in this practice. It also presents her as a leader, full of confidence and zeal. Another of the Gnostic texts, "Pistis Sophia" ("Faith Wisdom"), takes the form of a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. Of the forty-six questions put to Jesus, thirty-nine come from the Magdalene. Peter finally complains that no one else has a chance to speak. Another feature, then, of the Gnostic portrait of the Magdalene is the quarrel between her and Peter. Jesus repeatedly defends her, and that is the final, critical point about the Gnostic Magdalene: Jesus' preference for her. In another Gospel, she is referred to as his "companion," whom he often kissed. Some readers have taken this to mean that she was his mistress or wife, but kissing was common among people in the Middle East at that time, and the companionship seems to be based on Jesus' conviction of her superior understanding. When the disciples ask him, "Why do you love her more than all of us?," he answers, uncomfortingly, "If a blind person and one who can see are both in darkness, they are the same. When the light comes, one who can see will see the light, and the blind person will stay in darkness."

So, while the orthodox Church was busy eliminating women from positions of power, the Gnostic sects seem to have been following a different route. One of their texts says that Jesus had seven women as well as twelve men among his disciples. The Gnostic pantheon includes female divinities. But Exhibit A is the Magdalene: her leadership and Christ's endorsement of it. This is not to say that the Gnostic Gospels portray a gender-blind community. In another passage in which Peter complains about the Magdalene—"Mary should leave us," he says, "for females are not worthy of life"—Jesus replies, "Look, I shall guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter heaven's kingdom." This statement, a disappointment to many admirers of Gnosticism, has been explained by scholars as a reflection of the ancient belief, accepted even by the forward-thinking Gnostics, that women stood for earthly matters, while men were more in touch with the divine. Jesus is saying that his female disciples, despite their sex, will become spiritual. Peter clearly does not agree. So the authority of women was a point of conflict among the Gnostics, too.

We know how the orthodox Church—which, not incidentally, claimed its apostolic mission from Peter—solved this problem, and the fact that the Gnostic communities seem to have been solving it otherwise was one of the reasons that they were regarded as heretics. In any case, it was in the fourth century, at the moment when the orthodox Church was finally, after centuries of persecution, achieving stability, that the leaders of a Gnostic community near Nag Hammadi, apparently feeling that they were now in serious danger, put their most precious books in a jar and buried it in the hillside.

Their problem wasn't just women, though. As Elaine Pagels explains, the Church's whole effort at this time was to create an institution, and certain Gnostic principles—above all, the rejection of rules and hierarchies—were utterly incompatible with institutionalization. Pagels also points out that Gnosticism, for all its egalitarianism, was élitist. To qualify, you had to set yourself, over a long course of study, to discovering the divine within yourself. This was not for everyone, and the orthodox Church wanted everyone. Accordingly, the Church did not ask people to search for the divine—their priest would tell them what the divine was—and it assured them that as long as they confessed certain prescribed articles of faith and observed certain simple rituals, they, too, could enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Without these reasonable, followable rules, Pagels writes, "one can scarcely imagine how the Christian faith could have survived."

Other writers have been less understanding. Feminist Bible scholarship began in the early nineteenth century and carried on quietly until the nineteen-sixties, when it acquired new force in the wake of Vatican II. Soon afterward came the publication of the Nag Hammadi library. The feminists had long suspected that the New Testament, together with its commentators, had downplayed women's contributions to the founding of Christianity. Here was the proof. Writings on the Magdalene exploded after 1975. Conveniently, this happened at the same time as the rise of postmodern literary theory, which held that all texts were unstable and porous, marked by "gaps" that the reader had to fill. If anything ever had gaps, it was the revised Magdalene. She wasn't a prostitute anymore, but what was she? Young scholars tried to figure out what happened to her story. To mention only two recent books, Ann Graham Brock, in "Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority" (2003), and Holly E. Hearon, in "The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities" (2004), took on the New Testament Gospels, claiming that they suppressed the oral traditions descending from the Magdalene in favor of traditions descending from Peter's ministry.

But the most searching and passionately argued of the books in this category is "The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the New Testament" (2002), by Jane Schaberg, a professor at the University of Detroit Mercy. With tweezers, as it were, Schaberg goes through the New Testament, the Gnostic Gospels, and later writings to pull out and expose the textual maneuvers by which, in her words, the Magdalene was "replaced, appropriated, and left behind" by the orthodox Church. Between the first and fourth centuries, she believes, Christianity coalesced into a few broad traditions. One was Magdalene Christianity, whose goal was to put an end to the oppression of the world's powerless. Magdalene Christianity was egalitarian in its organization, like the Jesus movement in which it originated. In that campaign, Schaberg says, Jesus was "not hero or leader or God" but just a brother to his fellow-reformers. It was only after his death and supposed Resurrection that the focus shifted from the group to him alone, and that he was deified. Clearly, however, Schaberg sees him as having had special authority within the movement, for she proposes that he chose the Magdalene as his successor. That, she says, is what the Resurrection announcement was about. The Resurrection, to Jesus, meant the ethical renewal of the world, and in making the Resurrection announcement to

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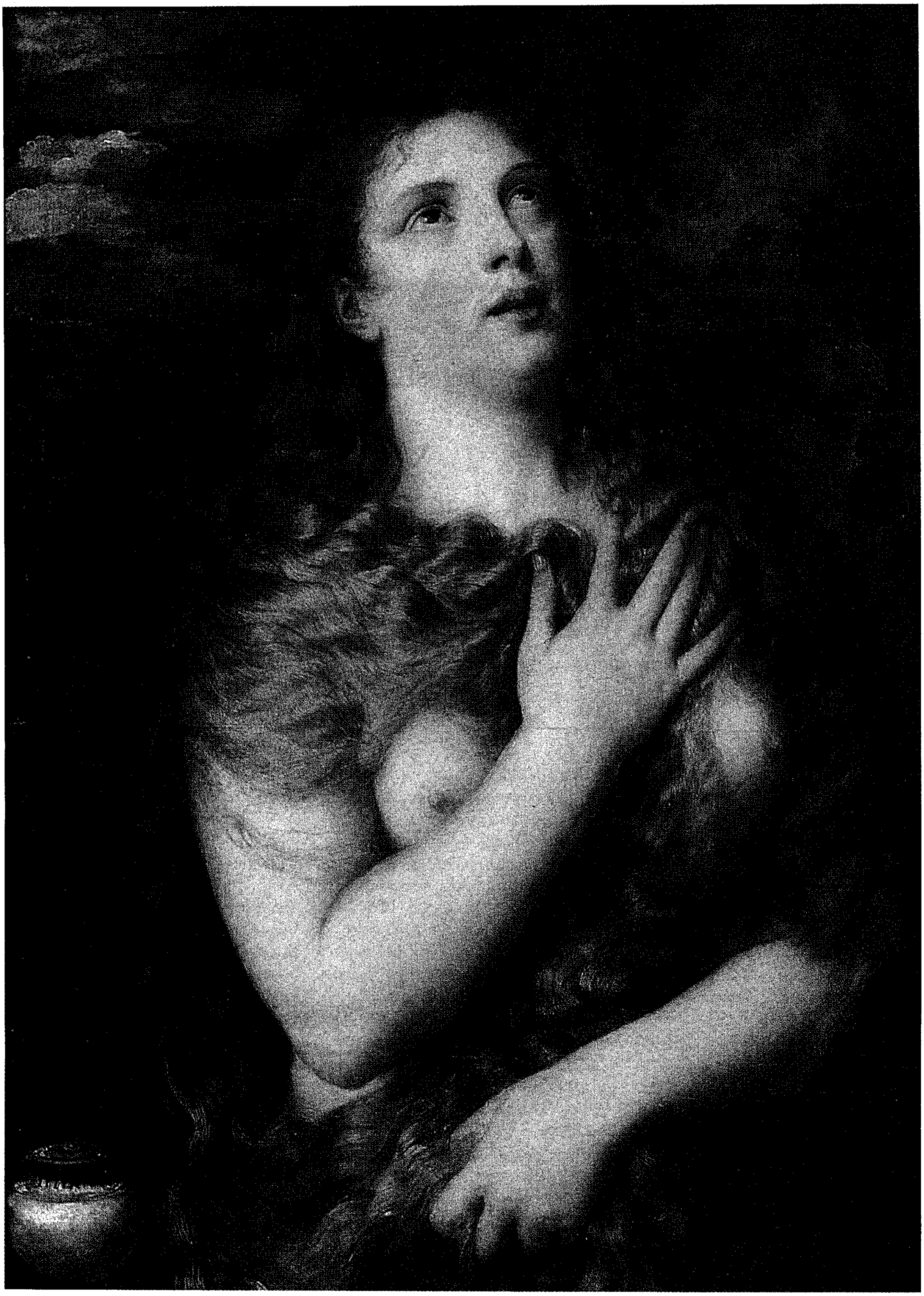


Titian's painting of the Magdalene in her grotto, from 1530–35. In the Renaissance, she became a "Venus in sackcloth."

"I hate what's happened to the neighborhood."

the Magdalene he was passing this mission on to her. But, while the Magdalene and the communities she inspired were fulfilling this assignment, other traditions, notably those descending from Peter and Paul, were branching off in less egalitarian directions. Those were the traditions that won, and, lest anyone recall the woman who wanted to create a different sort of Church, they "murdered" her memory, by turning her into a harlot.

Schaberg says that all this is guesswork. That's fine by her. Since the nineteen-seventies, there has been a true paradigm shift in Biblical scholarship. Before, people thought that Christianity was a truth; even the reformers sought only a modification of that truth. But, with the publication of the Gnostic Gospels, abetted by postmodern theory, a number of young scholars came to regard early Christianity entirely differently—as a *process*, a vast, centuries-long argument among competing sects, during which certain choices were made. And, as these writers saw it, choices were still being made, which meant that any new proposals, however conjectural, were not only useful but essential. People don't have to worry about contradicting the New Testament, Schaberg says. That document was just a draft: "a collage of fragments, aborted ideas, blackouts, white spaces, instructions, verbal experimentations, doodles, dots." Earlier writers had also said that Christians had to make their own Christianity—and that it should be political. In the words of the Harvard theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, feminist reinterpretations were a good thing, a way to "develop and adjudicate our own Christological meaning-making in the face of violence and killing today." Fiorenza's views, cousin to "liberation theology" (she calls the Magdalene one of "the disappeared"), were embraced by many young Bible scholars. Schaberg describes herself as a "guerrilla exegete."

Not all the reformers have bared their teeth. In November, Doubleday brought out "Mary Magdalene: A Biography" ($23.95), by Bruce Chilton, an Episcopal priest and a professor of religion at Bard College. According to Chilton, the Magdalene was one of the "shaping forces of Christianity." Especially important, as he sees it, was her visionary experience, both in the Gnostic Gospels and in the Resurrection announcement, which he takes to be a subjective, not an objective, event. Chilton, then, is one of those who believe that they can advance a more modern, acceptable Christianity by questioning the existence of miracles. Many of the Catholic reformers, like Fiorenza and Schaberg, seem to be past that stage. They belong to a Church that *really* believes in miracles, and whatever skepticism they felt regarding those fantastic events appears to have been exhausted years ago. Schaberg, when confronted with the question of whether Christ underwent a bodily resurrection, refuses to make the call. "Who knows?" she says. "Who cares?" Chilton cares. To him, apparently, as to many of the older liberal clergy, miracles are a mumbo-jumbo separating the faithful from the true meaning of Scripture. And so, in his view, Lazarus was not raised from the dead. He was probably buried alive by mistake—Jesus rescued him. Likewise, it is only "resuscitation literalists" who believe that Christ underwent a bodily resurrection. If the tomb was empty, maybe somebody stole the body. Christ was a man, with an idea about love and justice, and we should follow his lead without bothering about those old stories. By now, however, such an argument seems, itself, an old story, of limited usefulness. Many, probably most, of the world's two billion Christians do believe in miracles, and want to. This makes life more interesting and serious to them. To mount reform on a denial of miracles seems futile and also—however unwittingly—unkind.

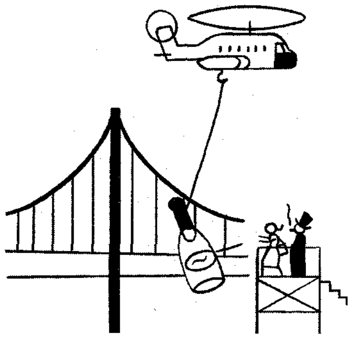
The Catholic reformers, from what I can tell, are not just more radical. They also seem more likely to spawn fringe groups such as "goddess worship." In 1993, Margaret Starbird, a good Catholic who never publishes anything without letting her pastor read it first, came out with her book "The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail." Starbird says that when she read "Holy Blood, Holy Grail" she was "shattered" by its claim that Jesus was married. She didn't reject it out of hand, though. She did seven years of research, and concluded that "Holy Blood" was right: Jesus was married to the Magdalene. Not only that, but the suppression of this secret—and of the "forgotten feminine" in general—had caused terrible trouble in the world: environmental pollution, child abuse, war. But now the divine goddess was fed up. Statues of the Virgin Mary "have been seen to shed tears in churches worldwide. . . . Even the stones cry out!" So do Disney movies. In "The Little Mermaid," Ariel's true identity is the "Lost Bride," the Magdalene. The forgotten feminine is on its way back.

Starbird goes beyond analysis; she writes a love story. Jesus was a tall, handsome fellow; the Magdalene was a shy Jewish maiden, accustomed to sitting in her garden and gazing at little birds. One day, they were introduced. "His dark eyes caressed her." We are taken through their wedding night, alas. Soon afterward, Jesus tells the Magdalene, now pregnant, that he has to go on a dangerous mission and that she must stay behind. "She buried her tears in the warmth of his shoulder." The academic feminists have very little patience with the Jesus-married-the-Magdalene plot. As Schaberg sees it, these stories are not about the Magdalene. They are about Jesus; they are an effort to make him a "real man," and not just for humanistic, Christ-is-your-friend reasons. (In the sixties, there were some naughty suggestions that maybe Jesus was gay.) Insofar as the love plot concerns the Magdalene, Schaberg writes, it is again demeaning, an attempt to convert this independent woman into a "normal" female. Starbird's book bears out that theory.

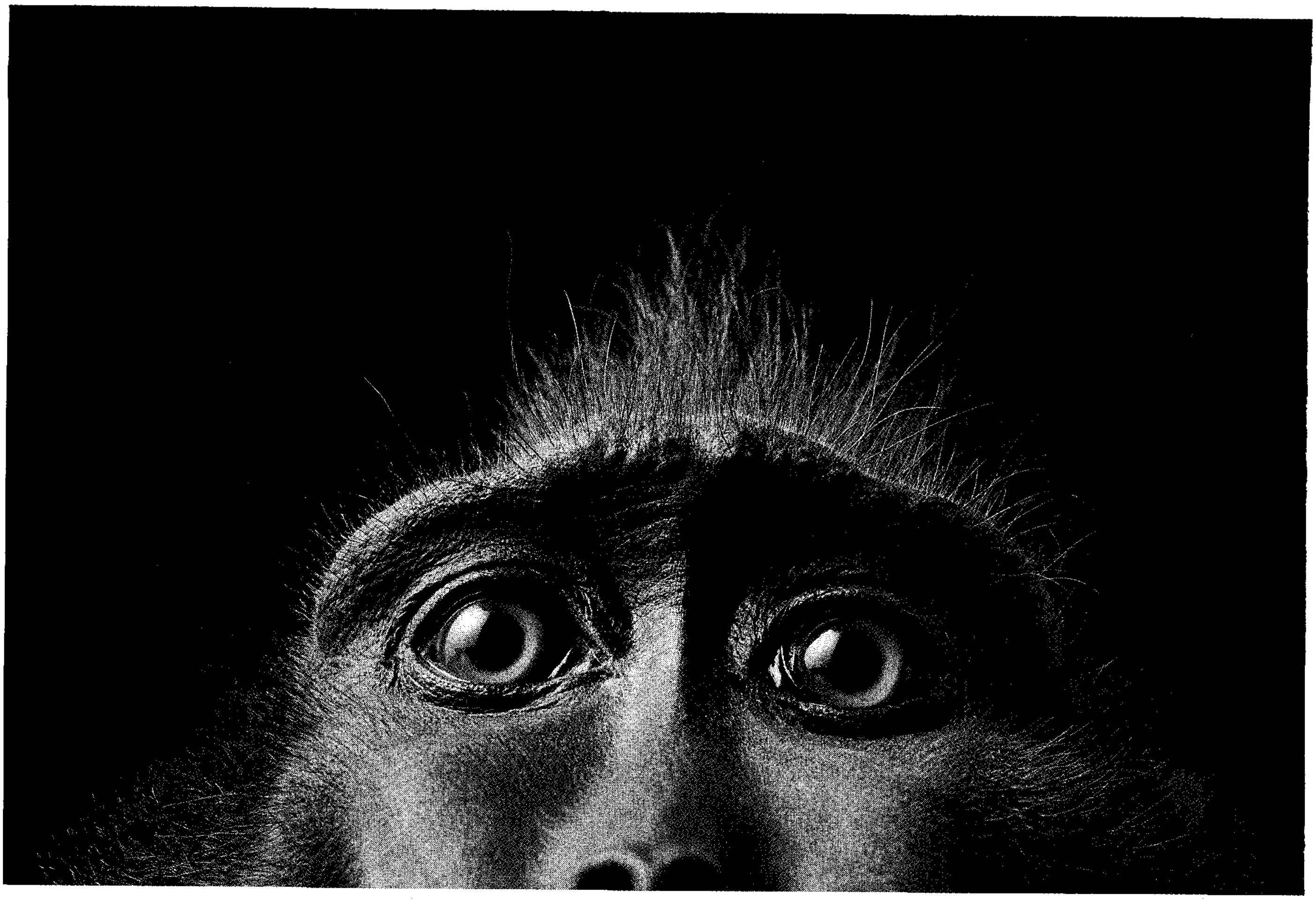
She is not the only one who has resorted to fiction. There have been quite a few novels about the Magdalene in the past few decades, and many of them, according to Susan Haskins, are reluctant to part with the Magdalene's reputation as a prostitute. The trend is to celebrate her as a sexually liberated woman. Behind this, of course, is second-stage feminism, but I think there is another motive as well, an effort to smuggle a little liveliness back into the Magdalene's story.

A problem for the Magdalene revival, or at least for the theologians, is that it has had to draw its reconfigured heroine from the austere philosophy of the Gnostics. A religion, in order to succeed, must offer a little fun: stories, symbols, rituals. The Catholic saints, however ill-founded their biographies, are a vivid group, each with a certain kind of hair and a certain hat, and accompanied by a lion or a dragon or something else interesting. They are like a collection of dolls or superheroes, or like the Hindu pantheon—full of color and variety. The New Testament, for the most part, gives the Magdalene no concrete life. The medieval legend filled that void, equipped her with a boat, a grotto, some friends. Take these things away, and you are back to zero. The Gnostic Gospels don't provide much of a personality for her, and what they do come up with is not endearing. The Gnostic Magdalene is a showy visionary. At one point, she responds to something Jesus has said by staring into the air for an hour. She is also a swot, the best student in class, constantly raising her hand. If I had been Peter, I would have complained, too. The feminists are of course right to point to her Gnostic virtues—the visionary faculty, the zeal—as an answer to the Church's demotion of her, and of all women. Still, we miss the red-gold hair, the ointment jar.

At one moment, however, the faceless Magdalene is given not just a face but a great, flaming personal drama. This is not in the Gnostic Gospels but in the New Testament, in John's account of the Resurrection announcement. Here the Magdalene goes to the tomb in darkness, before dawn, and she goes alone. We feel her hurry, her sense of danger. To her astonishment, she finds the stone rolled away. She runs back to the disciples and tells them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." Peter and another disciple take over. They rush to the tomb; indeed, they race to see who can get there first. (This exemplary male competition became a favorite scene in medieval morality plays. In John's Gospel, it adds a bright little note of comedy to the otherwise dark tale.) When they arrive, they see that the Magdalene was right: the body is gone. They go back home, presumably baffled, but the Magdalene stays behind, weeping. She looks again into the tomb, and now she sees two angels dressed in white. They ask her why she is crying, and she repeats her simple complaint: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Even with angels, she's still looking for the body. But then she turns around and sees another figure, who says to her, "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" The tomb is in a garden, and the Magdalene thinks this man must be the gardener. A third time—it's like a song—she repeats her complaint: "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him." Now comes the stab through the heart. "Mary," the "gardener" says to her, and instantly she knows. "Rabboni" (roughly, "My dear rabbi"), she replies, and apparently she reaches out to him, because he says, "Touch me not." (This is the Latin Bible's famous phrase "Noli me tangere.") "But," he tells her, "go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father." He then vanishes, and she is left by herself.



This scene is the New Testament's most powerful statement about the confrontation with death, about losing forever the thing you love. The setting is beautiful: the green garden, the morning light, the angels. Then we hear the cruel words: "Don't touch me." He was there; he had called her name; she had reached out to embrace him. Now she must stand back, let him go, and make her way alone. The young Bible scholars should have all our support, and we should agree with them that the energetic, far-seeing Magdalene of the Gnostic texts is good evidence that the Church should ordain women. But that is not the evidence of the Magdalene's authority on matters of the soul. John's story is the evidence. ♦



FICTION

A SHINAGAWA MONKEY

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI

She sometimes had trouble remembering her own name. Usually this happened when someone unexpectedly asked what it was. She'd be at a boutique, getting the sleeves of a dress altered, and the saleswoman would say, "Your name, Ma'am?," and her mind would go blank. The only way she could remember it was to pull out her driver's license, which was bound to seem weird to the person she was talking to. Even if she was on the phone when it happened, the awkward silence as she rummaged through her purse inevitably made the person at the other end wonder what was going on.

She could remember everything else. She never forgot the names of the people around her. Her address, phone number, birthday, and passport number were no problem at all. She could rattle off her friends' phone numbers, and the numbers of important clients. And when she was the one who brought up her name she never had any trouble remembering it. As long as she knew in advance what to expect, her memory was fine. But when she was in a hurry or unprepared, it was as if a circuit had been broken. The more she struggled, the clearer it became that she couldn't, for the life of her, remember what she was called.

Her married name was Mizuki Ando; her maiden name was Ozawa. Neither name was unique or particularly dramatic, though that still didn't explain how they could, in the course of her busy schedule, vanish from her memory. She had been Mizuki Ando for three years, since she married a man named Takashi Ando. At first she hadn't been able to get used to her new name. The way it looked and sounded just didn't seem right to her. But, gradually, after she had repeated it and signed it a number of times, she began to feel more comfortable with it. Compared with other possibilities—Mizuki Mizuki, for instance, or Mizuki Miki (she'd actually dated a guy named Miki for a while)—Mizuki Ando wasn't bad.

She'd been married for a couple of years when the name started to slip

TIM FLACH/GETTY IMAGES; HELLEN VAN MEENE, "UNTITLED #97" (2000)/SADIE COLES HQ

away from her. At first it happened only once a month or so, but over time it became more frequent. Now she was forgetting her name at least once a week. If she had her purse with her she was fine. If she ever lost her purse, though, she'd be lost, too. She wouldn't entirely disappear, of course—she still remembered her address and phone number. This wasn't like those cases of total amnesia in the movies. Still, the fact remained that forgetting her name was upsetting. A life without a name, she felt, was like a dream you never wake up from.

Mizuki went to a jewelry store, bought a thin, simple bracelet, and had her name engraved on it: "Mizuki (Ozawa) Ando." She felt like a cat or a dog, but still she was careful to wear the bracelet every time she left home. If she forgot her name, all she had to do was glance down at her wrist. No more yanking out her license, no more strange looks from other people.

She didn't tell her husband about her problem. She knew he'd only decide that it meant she was unhappy with their marriage. He was overly logical about everything. He didn't mean any harm by it; that was just the way he was—always theorizing. He was also quite a talker, and he didn't easily back down once he had started on a topic. So she kept the whole thing to herself. Still, she thought, what her husband said—or would have said if he'd known about the problem—was off the mark. She wasn't dissatisfied with their marriage. Aside from her husband's sometimes excessive rationality, she had no complaints about him at all.

Mizuki and her husband had recently taken out a mortgage and bought a condo in a new building in Shinagawa. Her husband, who was now thirty, worked in a lab in a pharmaceutical company. Mizuki was twenty-six and worked at a Honda dealership, answering the phone, getting coffee for customers, making copies, filing, and updating the customer database. Mizuki's uncle, an executive at Honda, had got her the position after she graduated from a women's junior college in Tokyo. It wasn't the most thrilling job she could imagine, but she did have some responsibility, and over all it wasn't so bad. Whenever the salesmen were out she took over, and she always did a decent job of answering the customers' questions. She had watched the salesmen at work, and quickly grasped the necessary technical information. She'd memorized the mileage ratings of all the models in the showroom and could convince anyone, for instance, that the Odyssey handled less like a minivan than like an ordinary sedan. Mizuki was a good conversationalist, and she had a winning smile that always put customers at ease. She also knew how to subtly change tacks, based on her reading of each customer's personality. Unfortunately, however, she didn't have the authority to give discounts, to negotiate trade-ins, or to throw in free options, so, even if she had the customer ready to sign on the dotted line, in the end she had to turn things over to one of the salesmen, who would get the commission. The only reward she could expect was a free dinner now and then from a salesman sharing his windfall.

Occasionally it crossed her mind that the dealership would sell more cars if it would let her do sales. But the idea didn't

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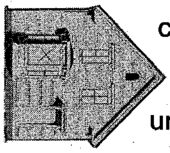

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occur to anyone else. That's the way a company operates: the sales division is one thing, the clerical staff another, and, except in very rare cases, those boundaries are unbreachable. But it didn't really matter; she wasn't ambitious and she wasn't looking for a career. She much preferred putting in her eight hours, nine to five, taking the vacation time she had coming, and enjoying her time off.

At work, Mizuki continued to use her maiden name. She knew that in order to change it she'd have to change all the data relating to her in the computer system. It was too much trouble and she kept putting it off. She was listed as married for tax purposes, but her name was unchanged. She knew that this wasn't the right way to do it, but nobody at the dealership said anything about it. So Mizuki Ozawa was still the name on her business cards and on her time card. Her husband knew that she was still going by her maiden name at work (he called her there occasionally), but he didn't seem to have a problem with it. He understood that it was simply a matter of convenience. As long as he saw the logic of what she was doing, he didn't complain. In that sense, he was pretty easygoing.

Mizuki began to worry that forgetting her name might be a symptom of some awful disease, perhaps an early sign of Alzheimer's. The world was full of unexpected, fatal diseases. She had only recently discovered that myasthenia and Huntington's disease existed. There had to be countless other diseases she'd never heard of. And with most of these illnesses the early symptoms were quite minor. Minor but unusual symptoms such as—forgetting your own name?

She went to a large hospital and explained her situation. But the young doctor in charge—who was so pale and exhausted he looked more like a patient than like a physician—didn't take her seriously. "Do you forget anything besides your name?" he asked. "No," she said. "Right now it's just my name." "Hmm. This sounds more like a psychiatric case," he said, his voice devoid of interest or sympathy. "If you start to forget anything else, please check back with us. We can run some tests then." *We've got our hands full with people who are much more seriously ill than you,* he seemed to be implying.

One day in the newsletter for the local ward, Mizuki came across an article announcing that the ward office would be opening a counselling center. It was a tiny article, something she would normally have overlooked. The center would be open twice a month and would be staffed by a professional counsellor offering private sessions at a greatly reduced rate. Any resident of Shinagawa Ward who was over eighteen was welcome to make use of the service, the article said, and everything would be held in the strictest confidence. Mizuki had her doubts about whether a ward-sponsored counselling center would do her any good, but she decided to give it a try. The dealership was busy on the weekends, but getting a day off during the week wasn't difficult, and she was able to adjust to fit the schedule of the counselling center, which was an unrealistic one for ordinary working people. One thirty-minute session cost two thousand yen, which was not an excessive amount for her to pay.

When she arrived at the counselling center, Mizuki found that she was the only client. "This program was started rather suddenly," the receptionist explained. "Most people don't know about it yet. Once people find out, I'm sure we'll get busier."

The counsellor, whose name was Tetsuko Sakaki, was a pleasant, heavyset woman in her late forties. Her short hair was dyed a light brown, her broad face wreathed in an amiable smile. She wore a pale summer suit, a shiny silk blouse, a necklace of artificial pearls, and low heels. She looked less like a counsellor than like a friendly neighborhood housewife.

"My husband works in the ward office here, you see," she said, by way of introduction. "He's the section chief of the Public Works Department. That's how we were able to get support from the ward and open this center. Actually, you're our first client, and we're very happy to have you. I don't have any other appointments today, so let's just take our time and have a good heart-to-heart talk." The woman spoke at a measured pace; everything about her was slow and deliberate.

"It's very nice to meet you," Mizuki said. Privately, though, she wondered

LYING UPON THE WATERS

Stinking Mediterranean city
stretched out over the waters
head between her knees,
her body befouled by smoke and dunghills.
Who will raise from the dunghills
a rotten Mediterranean city,
her feet scabby and galled?
Her sons requite each other
with knives.

Now the city is flooded with crates of plums and grapes,
cherries laid out in the marketplace
in the sight of every passerby,
the setting sun peachy pink.
Who could really hate
a doped-up Mediterranean city
lowing like a cow in heat,
her walls Italian marble and crumbling sand,
decked out in rags and broidered work.
But she doesn't mean it at all,
doesn't mean anything at all.
And the sea is full, brimming at her blind forehead,
and the sun pours his horn of mercy upon her
when at dusk his wrath subsides.
And the squashes and cucumbers and lemons bursting
with color and juice
waft over her the sweet savor of summer perfumes.
And she is not worthy.
Not worthy of love or pity.

Filthy Mediterranean city,
how my soul is bound up with her soul.
Because of a lifetime,
an entire lifetime.

—*Dahlia Ravikovitch*
(*1936-2005*)

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld.*)

whether this sort of person would be of any help to her.

"You can rest assured that I have a degree in counselling and lots of experience," the woman added, as if she'd read Mizuki's mind.

Mrs. Sakaki was seated behind a plain metal office desk. Mizuki sat on a small, ancient sofa that looked as if it had just been dragged out of storage. The springs were about to go, and the musty smell made her nose twitch.

She leaned back and began to explain what had been happening. Mrs. Sakaki nodded along. She didn't ask questions or show any surprise. She just listened carefully to Mizuki's story, and, except for the occasional frown, as if she were considering something, her face remained unchanged; her faint smile, like a spring moon at dusk, never wavered.

"It was a wonderful idea to put your name on a bracelet," she commented after Mizuki finished. "I like the way you dealt with it. The first goal is to come up with a practical solution, to minimize the inconvenience. Much better to deal with the issue in a realistic way than to brood over it. I can see that you're quite clever. And it's a lovely bracelet. It looks good on you."

"Do you think that forgetting one's name might be connected with a more serious disease?" Mizuki asked. "Are there cases of this?"

"I don't believe that there are any diseases that have that sort of defined early symptom," Mrs. Sakaki said. "I am a little concerned, though, that the symptoms have got worse over the past year. I suppose it's possible that this could lead to other symptoms, or that your memory loss could spread to other areas. So let's take it one step at a time and determine where it all started."

Mrs. Sakaki began by asking several basic questions about Mizuki's life. "How long have you been married?" "What kind of work do you do?" "How is your health?" She went on to ask her about her childhood, about her family, her schooling. Things she enjoyed, things she didn't. Things she was good at, things she wasn't. Mizuki tried to answer each question as honestly and as quickly as she could.

Mizuki had grown up in a quite ordinary family. Her father worked for a large insurance company, and though her parents weren't affluent by any means, she never remembered them hurting for money. Her father was a serious person; her mother was on the delicate side and a bit of a nag. Her older sister was always at the top of her class, though Mizuki felt she was a little shallow and sneaky. Still, Mizuki had no special problems with her family. She'd never had any major fights with them. Mizuki herself had been the sort of child who didn't stand out. She never got sick. She didn't have any hang-ups about her looks, though nobody ever told her she was pretty, either. She saw herself as fairly intelligent, and she was always closer to the top of the class than to the bottom, but she didn't excel in any particular area. She'd had some good friends in school, but most of them had married and moved to other cities, and now they rarely kept in touch.

She didn't have anything bad to say about her marriage. In the beginning, she and her husband had made the usual mistakes that young newlyweds make, but over time they'd cobbled together a decent life. Her husband wasn't perfect, but he had many good qualities: he was kind, responsible, clean, he'd eat anything, and he never complained. He seemed to get along well with both his co-workers and his bosses.

As she responded to all these questions, Mizuki was struck by what an uninspired life she'd led. Nothing even remotely dramatic had ever touched her. If her life were a movie, it would be one of those low-budget nature documentaries guaranteed to put you to sleep. Washed-out landscapes stretching endlessly to the horizon. No changes of scene, no closeups, nothing ominous, nothing suggestive. Mizuki knew that it was a counsellor's job to listen to her clients, but she started to feel sorry for the woman who was having to listen to such a tedious life story. If it were me and I had to listen to endless accounts of stale lives like mine, Mizuki thought, at some point I'd keel over from sheer boredom.

Tetsuko Sakaki, though, listened intently to Mizuki, taking a few concise notes. When she spoke, her voice revealed no hint of boredom, just warmth and a genuine concern. Mizuki found herself strangely calmed. No one has ever listened to me so patiently, she realized. When their meeting ended, after just over an hour, Mizuki felt as if a burden had been lifted from her.

"Mrs. Ando, can you come at the same time next Wednesday?" Mrs. Sakaki asked, smiling broadly.

"Yes, I can," Mizuki replied. "You don't mind if I do?"

"Of course not. As long as you're interested. It can take many sessions of counselling before you see any progress. This isn't like one of those radio call-in shows where the host just tells you to hang in there. Let's take our time and do a good job."

"I wonder if there's any event you can recall that had to do with names?" Mrs. Sakaki asked during the second session. "Your name, somebody else's name, the name of a pet, the name of a place you've visited, a nickname, perhaps? If you have any memory at all concerning a name, I'd like you to tell me about it. It could be something trivial, so long as it has to do with a name. Try to remember."

Mizuki thought for a few minutes.

"I don't think I have any particular memory about a name," she said finally. "At least nothing's coming to me right now. Oh, wait . . . I do have a memory about a nametag."

"A nametag. Very good."

"But it wasn't my nametag," Mizuki said. "It was somebody else's."

"That doesn't matter," Mrs. Sakaki said. "Tell me about it."

"As I mentioned last week, I went to a private girls' school for both junior and senior high," Mizuki began. "I was from Nagoya and the school was in Yokohama, so I lived in the school dorm and went home on the weekends. I'd take the Shinkansen train home every Friday night and be back at school Sunday night. It was only two hours to Nagoya, so I didn't feel particularly lonely."

Mrs. Sakaki nodded. "But weren't there a lot of good private schools in Nagoya? Why did you have to go all the way to Yokohama?"

"My mother went to this school and she wanted one of her daughters to go there, too. And I thought it might be nice to live away from my parents. The school was a missionary school, but it was fairly liberal. I made some good friends there. All of them were like me—girls from other places whose mothers had attended the school. I was there for six years and I generally enjoyed it. The food was pretty bad, though."

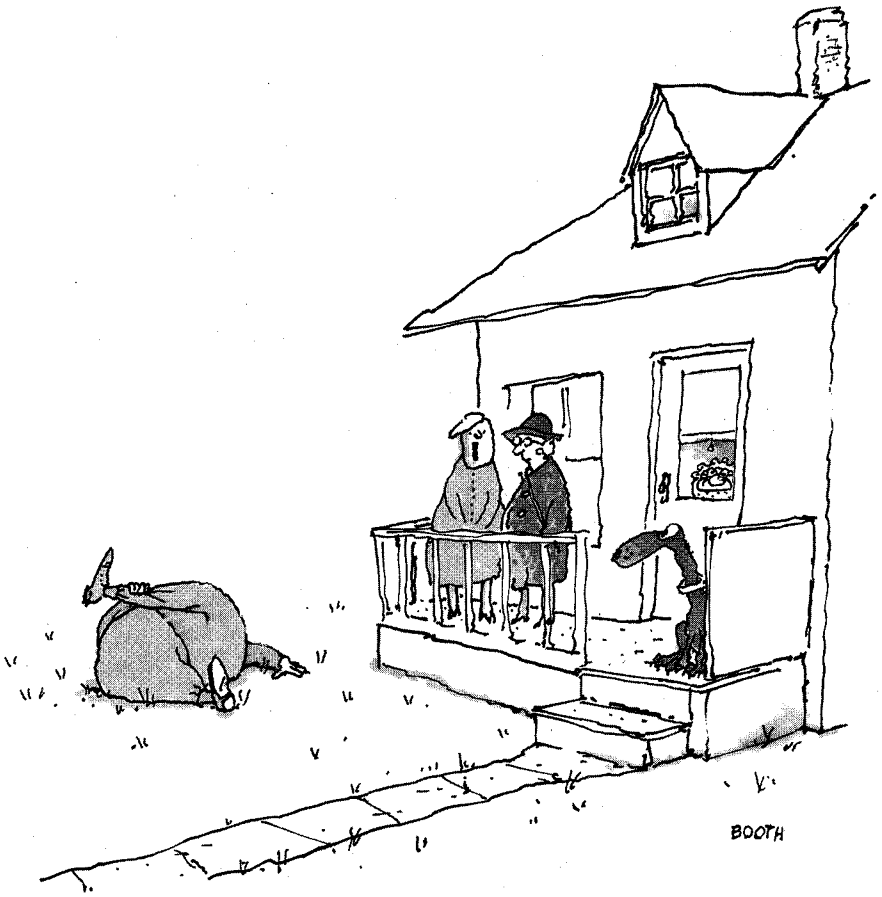
Mrs. Sakaki smiled. "You said you have an older sister?"

"That's right. She's two years older than me."

"Why didn't she go to that school?"

"She's more of a homebody, and she had some problems with her health. So she went to a local school and lived at home. I've always been a lot more independent than her. When I graduated from elementary school and my parents asked me if I'd go to the school in Yokohama, I said O.K. The idea of riding the Shinkansen every weekend was kind of exciting, too.

"For most of my time there I had a roommate, but when I got to be a senior I was given my own room. I was also appointed the student representative for my dorm. Every student in the dorm had a nametag, which hung on a board at the entrance to the building. The front of the nametag had your name in black, the back in red. Whenever you went out, you had to turn the nametag over, then you'd turn it over again when you came back. So if a girl's name was in



"Harrington challenges himself every day."

black, that meant that she was in the dorm; if it was red, you knew that she had gone out. If you were staying away overnight, or you were going to be on leave for a while, you had to take your nametag off the board. It was a convenient system. Students took turns manning the front desk and when a phone call came in it was very easy to tell a student's whereabouts just by glancing at the board.

"Anyway, this happened in October. Before dinner one night, I was in my room, doing my homework, when a junior named Yuko Matsunaka came to see me. She was by far the prettiest girl in the dorm—she had light skin, long hair, and beautiful, doll-like features. Her parents ran a well-known inn in Kanazawa and were quite well off. She wasn't in my class, so I'm not sure, but I heard that her grades were very good. In other words, she stood out. A lot of the younger students worshipped her. But Yuko was friendly and she wasn't stuck up at all. She was a quiet girl who didn't show her feelings much. I couldn't always tell what she was thinking. The younger girls may have looked up to her, but I don't think she had any close friends."

When Mizuki opened the door to her dorm room, Yuko Matsunaka was standing there, dressed in a tight turtleneck sweater and jeans. "Do you have a minute to talk to me?" Yuko asked. "Sure," Mizuki said, surprised. "I'm not doing anything special right now." Although she knew Yuko, Mizuki had never had a private conversation with her, and it had never occurred to her that Yuko might ask her advice about anything personal. Mizuki motioned for her to sit down while she made some tea with the hot water in her thermos.

"Mizuki, have you ever felt jealous?" Yuko said all of a sudden.

Mizuki was surprised by the question, but she gave it some serious thought.

"No, I guess I never have," she replied.

"Not even once?"

Mizuki shook her head. "At least, when you ask me out of the blue like that I can't remember anything. What kind of jealousy do you mean?"

"Like you love someone but he loves someone else. Like there's something you want very badly but someone else just grabs it. Or there's something you can't quite do, but someone else is able to do it with no effort. . . . That sort of thing."

"I don't think I've ever felt that way," Mizuki said. "Have you?"

"A lot."

Mizuki didn't know what to say. How could a girl like this want anything more in life? She was beautiful, rich, good at school, and popular. Her parents doted on her. Mizuki had heard rumors that she was dating a handsome college student. So who on earth could she be jealous of?

"Like when, for instance?" Mizuki asked.

"I'd rather not say," Yuko said, choosing her words carefully. "Listing all the details is pointless. But I've been wanting to ask you that for a while—whether you've ever felt jealous."

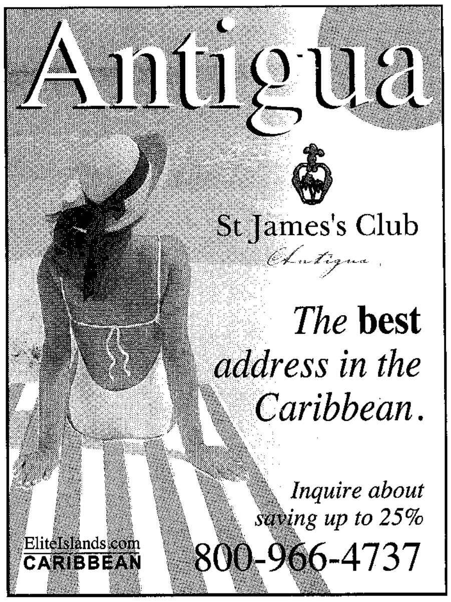
Mizuki had no idea what Yuko wanted from her, but she decided to answer as honestly as she could. "I don't think I've ever had that sort of feeling," she repeated. "I don't know why, and maybe it's a little strange if you think about it. I mean, it's not like I have tons of confidence or get everything I want. Actually, there are lots of things I should feel frustrated about, but, for whatever reason, that hasn't made me feel jealous of other people. I wonder why."

Yuko Matsunaka smiled faintly. "I don't think jealousy has much to do with objective conditions—like if you're fortunate you're not jealous but if life hasn't blessed you you are. Jealousy doesn't work that way. It's more like a tumor growing inside you that gets bigger and bigger, beyond all reason. Even if you know it's there, there's nothing you can do to stop it."

Mizuki listened without interrupting. Yuko hardly ever had so much to say at one time.

"It's hard to explain what jealousy is to someone who's never felt it," Yuko went on. "One thing I do know is it's not easy to live with. It's like carrying around your own small hell, day after day. You should be really thankful you've never felt this way."

Yuko stopped speaking and gave Mizuki what might pass for a smile. She really is lovely, Mizuki thought. How



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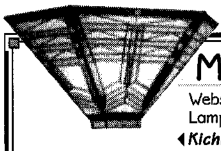

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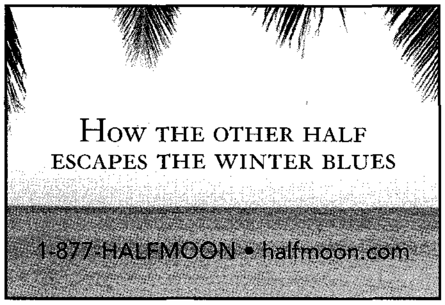

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would it feel to be like her—so beautiful you turn heads wherever you go? Is it something you can be proud of? Or is it more of a burden? Despite these thoughts, Mizuki never once felt jealous of Yuko.

"I'm going home now," Yuko said, staring at her hands in her lap. "One of my relatives died and I have to go to the funeral. I already got permission from the dorm master. I should be back by Monday morning, but while I'm gone I was wondering if you would take care of my nametag."

She extracted her nametag from her pocket and handed it to Mizuki.

"I don't mind holding on to it for you," Mizuki said. "But why go to the trouble of giving it to me? Couldn't you just stick it in a desk drawer?"

Yuko held Mizuki's gaze. "I just want you to hold on to it for me this time," she said. "Something's bothering me, and I don't want to keep it in my room."

"O.K.," Mizuki said.

"I don't want a monkey running off with it while I'm gone," Yuko said.

"I doubt that there are any monkeys here," Mizuki said brightly. It wasn't like Yuko to make jokes. And then Yuko left the room, leaving behind the nametag, an untouched cup of tea, and a strange empty space where she had been.

"On Monday Yuko didn't come back to the dorm," Mizuki told Mrs. Sakaki. "The teacher in charge of her class was worried, so he phoned her parents. It turned out that she'd never gone home. No one in her family had passed away, and there had been no funeral for her to attend. She'd lied about the whole thing. They found her body almost a week later. I heard about it when I came back from Nagoya the following Sunday. She had slit her wrists in the woods somewhere. No one knew why she'd done it. She didn't leave a note. Her roommate said that she'd seemed the same as always, not especially troubled by anything. Yuko had just killed herself without saying a word to anyone."

"But wasn't this Miss Matsunaka trying to tell *you* something?" Mrs. Sakaki asked. "When she came to your room and left her nametag with you. And talked about jealousy."

"It's true that she talked about jealousy with me. I didn't make much of it at the time, though later I realized that she must have wanted to tell someone about it before she died."

"Did you tell anyone that she'd come to see you?"

"No, I never did."

"Why not?"

Mizuki tilted her head and gave it some thought. "If I'd told people about it, it would only have caused more confusion. I don't think anyone would have understood."

"You mean that jealousy might have been the reason for her suicide?"

"Right. As I said, who in the world would a girl like Yuko be jealous of? Everybody was so upset at the time. I decided that the best thing was just to keep it to myself. You can imagine the atmosphere in a girls' dorm—talking about it would have been like lighting a match in a room filled with gas."

"What happened to the nametag?"

"I still have it. It's in a box at the back of my closet. Along with my own nametag."

"Why did you keep it?"

"Things were in such an uproar at school at the time that I missed my chance to return it. And the longer I waited, the harder it became to just casually turn it in. I couldn't bring myself to throw it away, either. Besides, I started to think that maybe Yuko had wanted me to keep that nametag. Why she picked me, I have no idea."

"Perhaps Yuko was interested in you for some reason. Maybe there was something in you that she was drawn to."

"I wouldn't know about that," Mizuki said.

Mrs. Sakaki was silent, gazing for a while at Mizuki as if trying to make sure of something.

"All that aside, you honestly never have felt jealous? Not even once in your life?"

Mizuki didn't reply right away. Finally, she said, "I don't think I have. Of course there are people who are more fortunate than I am. But that doesn't mean that I've ever felt jealous of them. I figure everybody's life is different."

"And since everybody's different there's no way to compare?"

"I suppose so."

"An interesting point of view," Mrs. Sakaki said, her hands folded together on top of her desk, her relaxed voice betraying amusement. "So that means that you can't comprehend what jealousy is?"

"I think I understand what might cause it. But it's true that I don't know what it actually feels like. How overpowering it is, how long it lasts, how much you suffer because of it."

When Mizuki got home, she went to her closet and pulled out the old cardboard box in which she kept Yuko's nametag, along with her own. All sorts of memorabilia from Mizuki's life were stuffed in the box—letters, diaries, photo albums, report cards. She kept meaning to get rid of all these things, but she never had time to sort through them, so she dragged the box along with her every time she moved. But no matter how hard she looked she couldn't find the envelope in which she kept the nametags. She was bewildered. She had looked in the box when she first moved into the condo and she distinctly remembered having seen the envelope. She hadn't opened the box since then. So the envelope had to be there. Where else could it have gone?

Mizuki had kept her counselling sessions a secret from her husband. She hadn't intended to, but explaining the whole situation just came to seem like more trouble than it was worth. And, besides, the fact that Mizuki was forgetting her name and going once a week to a ward-sponsored counsellor wasn't bothering him in any way.

Mizuki also kept the loss of the two nametags a secret. She decided that it shouldn't make any difference to her counselling if Mrs. Sakaki didn't know.

Two months passed. Every Wednesday, Mizuki made her way to the ward office for her appointment. The number of clients there had increased, so Mrs. Sakaki had had to scale back their one-hour sessions to thirty minutes. This didn't matter, though, since they had learned by now how to make the best use of their time together. Sometimes Mizuki wished that they could talk longer, but, given the low fees, she couldn't complain.

"This is our ninth session together," Mrs. Sakaki said, five minutes before the end of one appointment. "You aren't forgetting your name less often, but it hasn't got worse, has it?"

"No, it hasn't," Mizuki said.

"That's wonderful," Mrs. Sakaki said. She put her black-barrelled ballpoint pen back in her pocket and tightly clasped her hands on the desktop. She paused for a moment. "Perhaps—just perhaps—when you come next week we will make great progress concerning the issue we've been discussing."

"You mean my forgetting my name?"

"Exactly. If things go as planned, I should be able to determine a definite cause and even show it to you."

"The reason I'm forgetting my name?"

"Precisely."

Mizuki couldn't quite grasp what Mrs. Sakaki was getting at. "When you say a definite cause . . . you mean it's something visible?'

"Of course it's visible," Mrs. Sakaki said, rubbing her hands together in satisfaction. "I can't go into details until next week. At this point, I'm still not sure whether it will work out or not. I'm just hoping that it will."

Mizuki nodded.

"At any rate, what I'm trying to say is that we've gone up and down with this but things are finally heading toward a solution. You know what they say about life being three steps forward and two steps back? So don't worry. Just trust me, and I'll see you next week. And don't forget to make an appointment on your way out."

Mrs. Sakaki punctuated this with a wink.

The following week, when Mizuki entered the counselling office Mrs. Sakaki greeted her with the biggest smile Mizuki had ever seen on her.

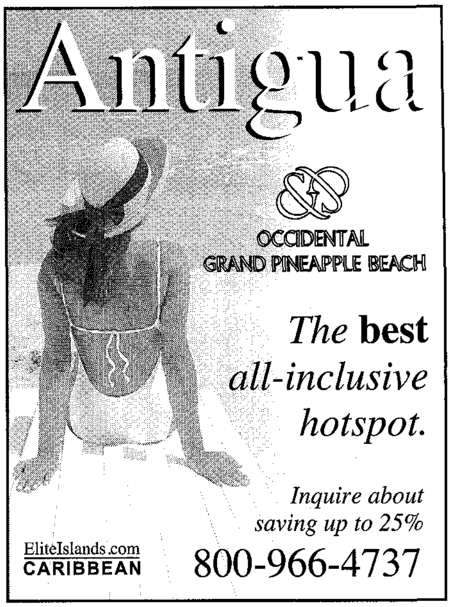
"I've discovered the reason you've been forgetting your name," she announced proudly. "And I've found a solution."

"So I won't be forgetting my name anymore?" Mizuki asked.

"Correct. You won't forget your name anymore. The problem has been solved."

Mrs. Sakaki took something out of a black handbag beside her and laid it on the desk. "I believe these are yours."

Mizuki got up from the sofa and walked over to the desk. On the desk were two nametags. "Mizuki Ozawa" was written on one of them, "Yuko



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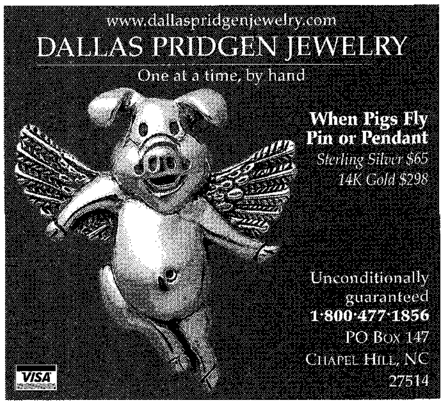

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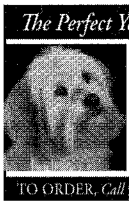

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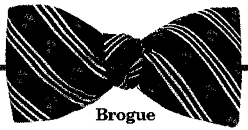

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Matsunaka” on the other. Mizuki turned pale. She went back to the sofa and sank down, speechless for a time. She pressed both palms against her mouth as if to prevent the words from spilling out.

“It's no wonder you're surprised,” Mrs. Sakaki said. “But there's nothing to be frightened of.”

“How did you . . . ” Mizuki said.

“How did I happen to find your high-school nametags?”

Mizuki nodded.

“I recovered them for you,” Mrs. Sakaki said. “Those nametags were stolen from you and that's why you had trouble remembering your name.”

“But who would . . . ”

“Who would break into your house and steal these two nametags, and for what possible purpose?” Mrs. Sakaki said. “Rather than having me respond to that, I think it's best if you ask the individual responsible directly.”

“The person who did it is here?” Mizuki asked in astonishment.

“Of course. We captured him and took back the nametags. That is, I didn't nab him myself. My husband and one of his men did it. Remember I told you that my husband is the section chief of the Public Works Department?”

Mizuki nodded without thinking.

“So what do you say we go meet the culprit? Then you can give him a piece of your mind face to face.”

Mizuki followed Mrs. Sakaki out of the counselling office, down the hallway, and into the elevator. They rode down to the basement and walked along a long deserted corridor to a door at the very end.

Inside was a tall, thin man in his fifties and a larger man in his mid-twenties, both dressed in light-khaki work clothes. The older man had a nametag on his chest that said “Sakaki”; the younger man had one that said “Sakurada.” Sakurada was holding a black nightstick.

“Mrs. Ando, I presume?” Mr. Sakaki asked. “I am Yoshio Sakaki, Tetsuko's husband. And this is Mr. Sakurada, who works with me.”

“Nice to meet you,” Mizuki said.

“Is he giving you any trouble?” Mrs. Sakaki asked her husband.

“No, I think he's sort of resigned himself to the situation,” Mr. Sakaki said. “Sakurada here has been keeping an eye on him all morning, and apparently he's been behaving himself. So let's proceed.”

There was another door at the rear of the room. Mr. Sakurada opened it and switched on the light. He looked quickly around the room, then turned to the others. “Looks O.K.,” he said. “Come on in.”

They entered a small storage room of some kind; it held only one chair, on which a monkey was sitting. He was large for a monkey—smaller than an adult human, but bigger than, say, an elementary-school student. His hair was a shade longer than is usual for monkeys and was woven with gray. It was hard to tell his age, but he was definitely not young. The monkey's arms and legs were tightly tied to the wooden chair, and his long tail drooped on the floor. As Mizuki entered, the monkey shot her a glance, then stared back down at the ground.

“A monkey?” Mizuki asked in surprise.

“That's right,” Mrs. Sakaki replied. “A monkey stole the nametags from your apartment, right around the time that you began forgetting your name.”

I don't want a monkey running off with it, Yuko had said. So it wasn't a joke after all, Mizuki realized. A chill shot up her spine.

“I'm very sorry,” the monkey said, his voice low but spirited, with an almost musical quality to it.

“He can talk!” Mizuki exclaimed, dumbfounded.

“Yes, I can,” the monkey replied, his expression unchanged. “There's one other thing I need to apologize to you for. When I broke into your place, I wasn't planning to take anything besides the nametags, but I was so hungry I ended up grabbing two bananas that were on the table. They just looked too good to pass up."

"The nerve of this guy," Mr. Sakurada said, slapping the black nightstick against his palm a couple of times. "Who knows what else he swiped? Want me to grill him a little to find out?"

"Take it easy," Mr. Sakaki told him. "He confessed about the bananas voluntarily, and, besides, he doesn't strike me as such a brutal sort. Let's not do anything drastic until we hear the facts. If they find out that we mistreated an animal at the ward office we could be in deep trouble."

"Why did you steal the nametags?" Mizuki asked the monkey.

"It's what I do," the monkey answered. "I'm a monkey who takes people's names. It's a sickness I suffer from. Once I fix on a name, I can't help myself. Not just any name, mind you. I'll see a name that attracts me, and then I have to have it. I know it's wrong, but I can't control myself."

"Were you trying to break into our dorm and steal Yuko's nametag?"

"Yes, I was. I was head over heels in love with Miss Matsunaka. I've never been so attracted to somebody in my life. But when I wasn't able to make her mine I decided that, no matter what, I had to at least have her name. If I could possess her name, then I'd be satisfied. But before I could carry out my plan she passed away."

"Did you have anything to do with her suicide?"

"No, I didn't," the monkey said, shaking his head emphatically. "I had nothing to do with that. She was just overwhelmed by an inner darkness."

"But how did you know, after all these years, that Yuko's nametag was at my house?"

"It took me a long time to trace it. When Miss Matsunaka died, I tried to get her nametag from the bulletin board, but it was already gone. Nobody had any idea where. I worked my butt off trying to track it down, but no matter what I did I couldn't locate it. It didn't occur to me at the time that Miss Matsunaka would have left her nametag with you, since you weren't particularly close."

"True," Mizuki said.

"But one day I had a flash of inspiration that maybe—just maybe—she'd given it to you. This was in the spring of last year. It took me a long time to track you down—to find out that you'd got married, that your name was now Mizuki Ando, that you were living in a condo in Shinagawa. Being a monkey slows down an investigation like that, as you might imagine. At any rate, that's how I came to steal it."

"But why did you steal my nametag, too? Why not just Yuko's? I suffered a lot because of what you did!"

"I'm very, very sorry," the monkey said, hanging his head in shame. "When I see a name I like, I end up snatching it. This is kind of embarrassing, but your name really moved my poor little heart. As I said before, it's an illness. I'm overcome by urges I can't control. I know it's wrong, but I do it anyway. I deeply apologize for all the problems I caused you."

"This monkey was hiding in the sewers in Shinagawa," Mrs. Sakaki interjected. "So I asked my husband to have some of his younger colleagues catch him."

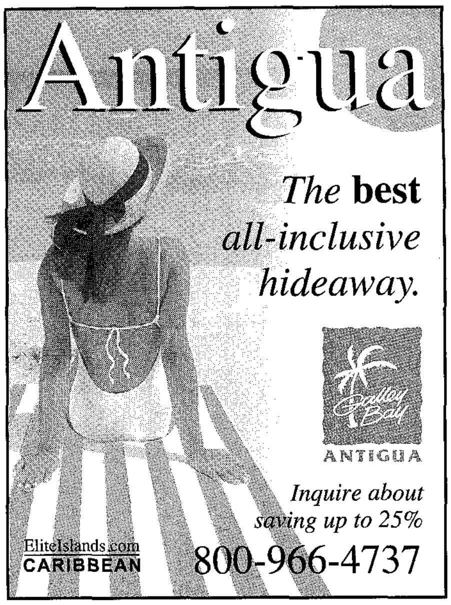
"Young Sakurada here did most of the work," Mr. Sakaki said.

"Public Works has to sit up and take notice when a character like this is hiding out in our sewers," Sakurada said proudly. "The monkey apparently had a hideout underneath Takanawa that he used as a base for foraging operations all over Tokyo."

"There's no place for us to live in the city," the monkey said. "There are so few trees, so few shady places in the daytime. If we go aboveground, people gang up on us and try to catch us. Children throw things at us or shoot us with BB guns. Dogs chase after us. TV crews pop up and shine bright spotlights on us. So we have to hide underground."

"But how on earth did you know that this monkey was hiding in the sewer?" Mizuki asked Mrs. Sakaki.

"As we've talked over the past two months, many things have gradually become clear to me," Mrs. Sakaki said. "It was like a fog lifting. I realized that there had to be something that was stealing names, and that whatever it was it had to be hiding underground. That sort of limited the possibilities—it was either in the subway or in the sewers. So



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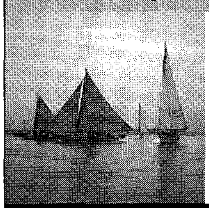

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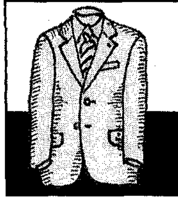

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I told my husband that I thought there was some creature, not a human, living in the sewers and asked him to look into it. And, sure enough, he came up with this monkey."

Mizuki was at a loss for words for a while. "But . . . how did just listening to me make you understand that?" she asked, finally.

"Maybe it's not my place, as her husband, to say this," Mr. Sakaki said with a serious look, "but my wife is a special person, with unusual powers. Many times during our twenty-two years of marriage I've witnessed strange events. That's why I worked so hard to help her open the counselling center here in the ward office. I knew that as long as she had a place where she could put her powers to good use, the residents of Shinagawa would benefit."

"What are you going to do with the monkey?" Mizuki asked.

"Can't let him live," Sakurada said casually. "No matter what he says, once they acquire a bad habit like this they're up to their old tricks again before long—you can count on it."

"Hold on now," Mr. Sakaki said. "No matter what reasons we might have, if some animal-rights group found out about us killing a monkey, it would lodge a complaint and you can bet there'd be hell to pay. You remember when we killed all those crows, the big stink about that? I'd like to avoid a repeat of that."

"I beg you, please don't kill me," the monkey said, bowing his head deeply. "What I've done is wrong. I understand that. I've caused a lot of trouble. I'm not trying to argue with you, but some good also comes from my actions."

"What possible good could come from stealing people's names?" Mr. Sakaki asked sharply.

"I do steal people's names, no doubt about that. But, in doing so, I'm also able to remove some of the negative elements that stick to those names. I don't mean to brag, but if I'd been able to steal Yuko Matsunaka's nametag back then, she might very well not have taken her life."

"Why do you say that?" Mizuki asked.

"Along with her name, I might have been able to take away some of the darkness that was inside her," the monkey said.

"That's too convenient," Sakurada said. "I don't buy it. The monkey's life is on the line—of course he's going to try to justify his actions."

"Maybe not," Mrs. Sakaki said, her arms folded. "He might have a point." She turned to the monkey. "When you steal names you take on both the good and the bad?"

"Yes, that's right," the monkey said. "I have no choice. I take on the whole package, as it were."

"Well—what sort of bad things came with my name?" Mizuki asked the monkey.

"I'd rather not say," the monkey said.

"Please tell me," Mizuki insisted. She paused. "If you answer my question, I'll forgive you. And I'll ask all those present to forgive you."

"Do you mean it?"

"If this monkey tells me the truth, will you forgive him?" Mizuki asked Mr. Sakaki. "He's not evil by nature. He has already suffered, so let's hear what he has to say and then you can take him to Mt. Takao or somewhere like that and release him. I don't think he'll bother anyone again. What do you think?"

"I have no objection, as long as it's all right with you," Mr. Sakaki said. He turned to the monkey. "How about it? You swear if we release you in the mountains you won't come back to the Tokyo city limits?"

"Yes, sir. I swear I won't come back," the monkey promised meekly. "I will never cause any trouble for you again. I'm not young anymore, and this will be a fresh start for me in life."

"All right, then, why don't you tell me what evil things have stuck to my name?" Mizuki said, staring right into the monkey's small red eyes.

"If I tell you it might hurt you."

"I don't care. Go ahead."

For a time the monkey thought about this, deep frown lines in his forehead. "I think it's better for you not to hear this," he said.

"I told you it's all right. I really want to know."

"O.K.," the monkey said. "Then I'll tell you. Your mother doesn't love you. She has never loved you, not even for a minute, since you were born. I don't know why, but it's true. Your older sis-

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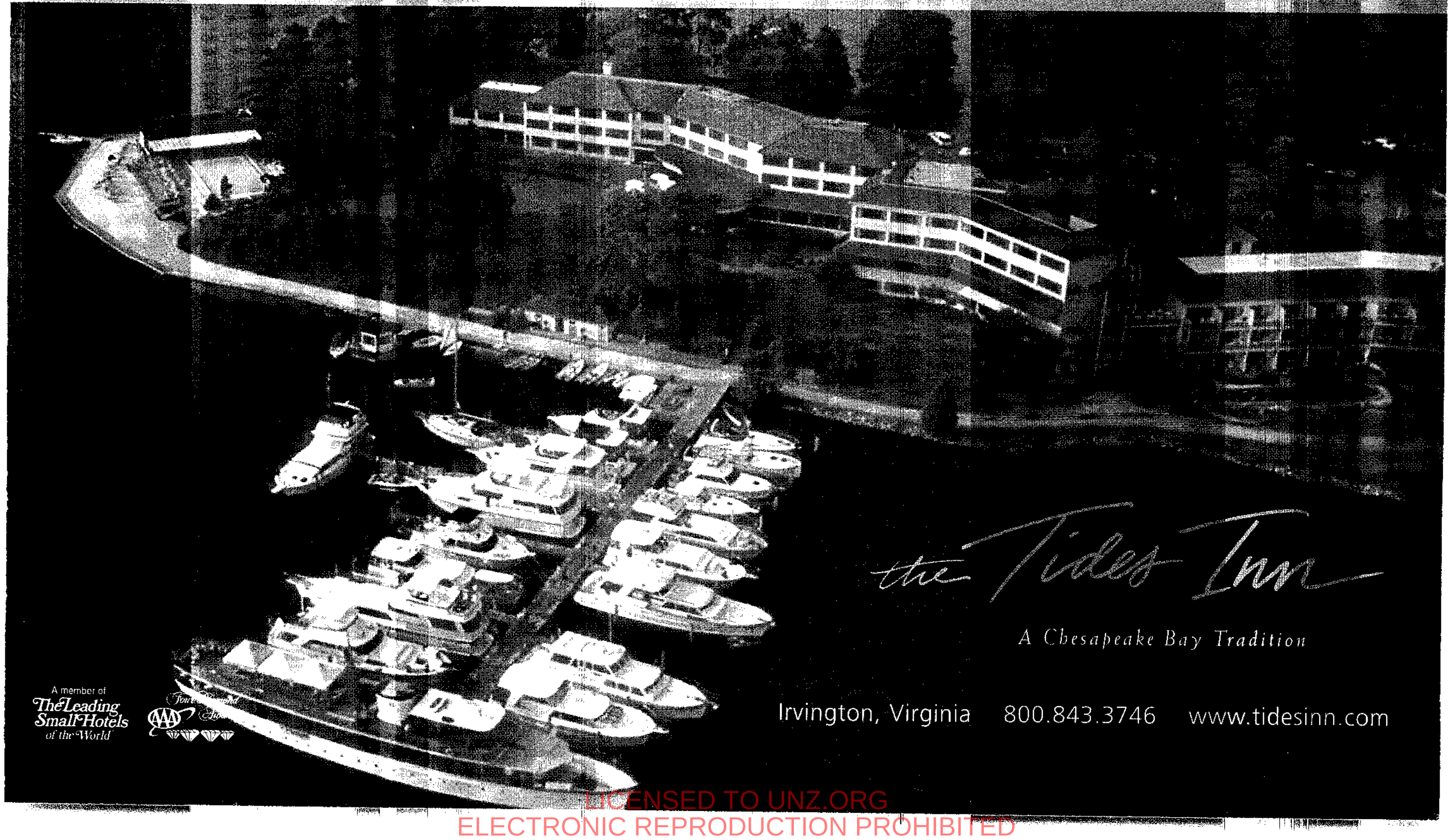

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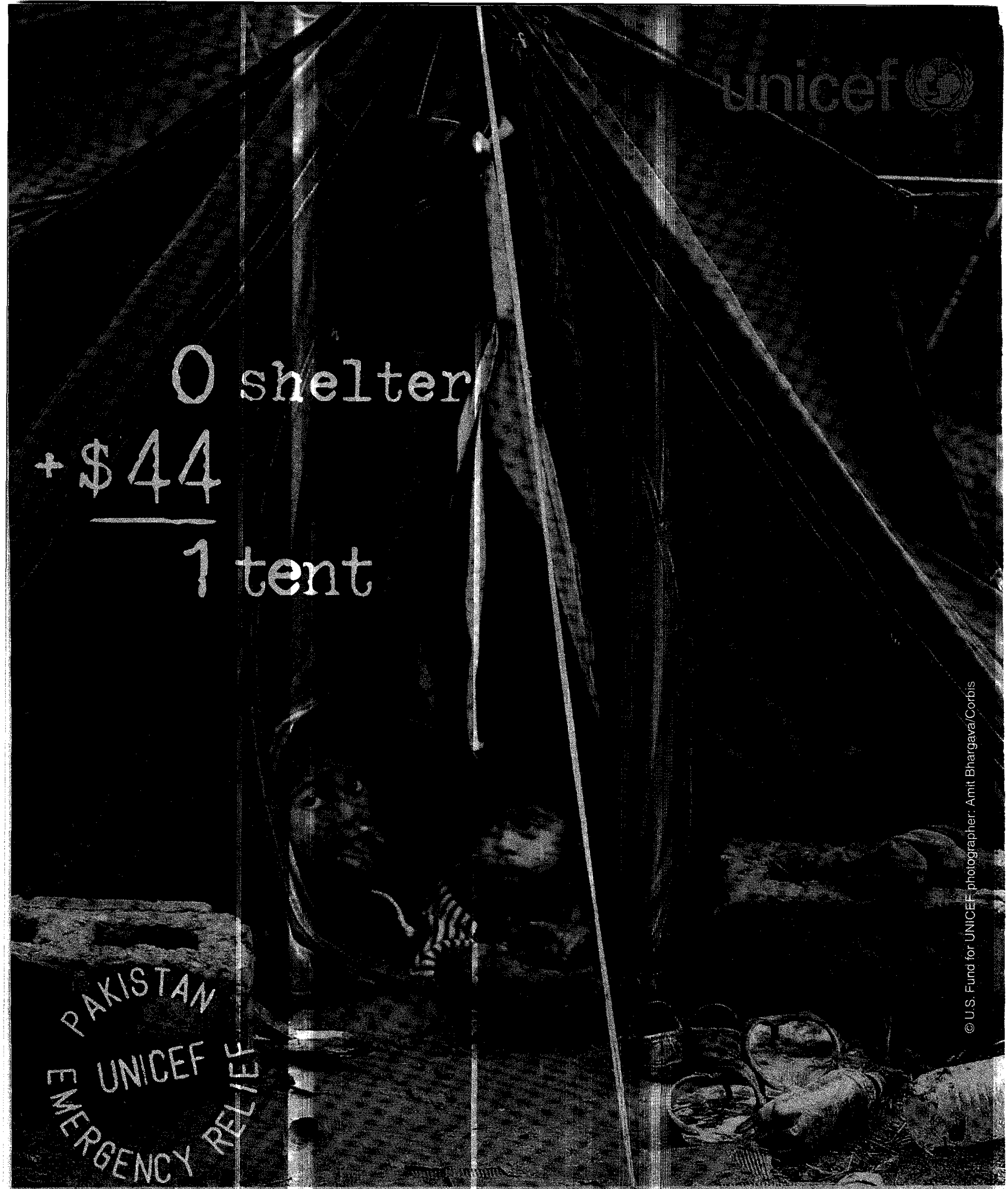
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ter doesn't like you, either. Your mother sent you to school in Yokohama because she wanted to get rid of you. She wanted to drive you as far away as possible. Your father isn't a bad person, but he isn't what you'd call a forceful personality, and he couldn't stand up for you. For these reasons, ever since you were small you've never got enough love. I think you've had an inkling of this, but you've intentionally turned your eyes away from it. You've shut this painful reality up in a small dark place deep in your heart and closed the lid. You've tried to suppress any negative feelings. This defensive stance has become part of who you are. Because of all this, you yourself have never been able to deeply, unconditionally love anybody else."

Mizuki was silent.

"Your married life seems happy and problem-free. And perhaps it is. But you don't truly love your husband. Am I right? Even if you were to have a child, it would be the same."

Mizuki didn't say anything. She sank down to the floor and closed her eyes. She felt as though her whole body were about to come apart. Her skin, her organs, her bones were crumbling. All she could hear was the sound of her own breathing.

"That's a terrible thing for a monkey to say," Sakurada said, shaking his head. "Chief, I can't stand it anymore. Let's beat the hell out of him!"

"Hold on," Mizuki said. "What the monkey's saying is true. I've known it for a long time, but I've always closed my eyes to it, blocked my ears. He's telling the truth, so please forgive him. Just take him to the mountains and let him go."

Mrs. Sakaki gently rested a hand on Mizuki's shoulder. "Are you sure you're O.K. with that?"

"I don't mind, so long as I get my name back. From now on I'm going to live with what's out there. That's my name, and that's my life."

As Mizuki was saying goodbye to the monkey, she handed him Yuko Matsunaka's nametag.

"You should have this, not me," she said. "Take good care of her name. And don't steal anybody else's."

"I'll take very good care of it. And I'm never going to steal again, I promise," the monkey said, with a serious look on his face.

"Do you know why Yuko left this nametag with me before she died? Why would she pick me?"

"I don't know why," the monkey said. "But, because she did, you and I were able to meet. A twist of fate, I suppose."

"You must be right," Mizuki said.

"Did what I told you hurt you?"

"It did," Mizuki said. "It hurt a lot."

"I'm sorry. I didn't want to tell you."

"It's all right. Deep down, I knew it already. It's something I had to confront someday."

"I'm relieved to hear that," the monkey said.

"Goodbye," Mizuki said. "I don't imagine we'll meet again."

"Take care," the monkey said. "And thank you for saving my poor life."

"You'd better not show your face around Shinagawa anymore," Sakurada warned, slapping his palm with the nightstick. "We're giving you a break this time since the Chief says so, but if I ever catch you here again you aren't going to get out alive."

"Well, so what should we do about next week?" Mrs. Sakaki asked after she and Mizuki returned to the counselling center. "Do you still have things you'd like to discuss with me?"

Mizuki shook her head. "No. Thanks to you, I think my problem is solved. I'm so grateful for everything you've done for me."

"You don't need to talk over the things the monkey told you?"

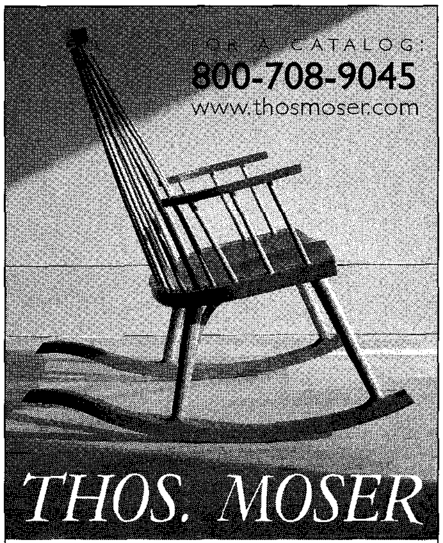
"No, I should be able to handle those myself. I'll have to think them over on my own for a while."

Mrs. Sakaki nodded. "If you put your mind to it," she said, "I know it will make you stronger."

The two women shook hands and said goodbye.

When she got home, Mizuki took her nametag and her bracelet and put them in a plain brown envelope. She placed the envelope inside the cardboard box in her closet. She finally had her name back and could resume a normal life. Things might work out. Then again, they might not. But at least she had her name now, a name that was hers, and hers alone. ♦

(Translated, from the Japanese, by Philip Gabriel.)



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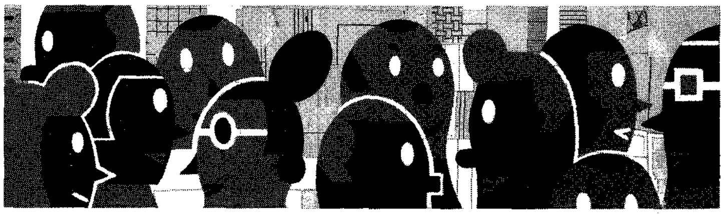


A CRITIC AT LARGE

SHINING TREE OF LIFE

What the Shakers did.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Weary old faiths make art while hot young sects make only trouble. Insincerity, or at least familiarity, seems to be a precondition of a great religious art—the wheezing and worldly Renaissance Papacy produced the Sistine ceiling, while the young Apostolic Church left only a few scratched graffiti in the catacombs. In America, certainly, very little art has attached itself directly to our own dazzling variety of sects and cults, perhaps because true belief is too busy with eternity to worry about the décor. The great exception is the Shakers, who managed, throughout the hundred or so years of their flourishing, to make objects so magically austere that they continue to astonish our eyes and our sense of form long after the last Shakers stopped shaking. Everything that they touched is breathtaking in its beauty and simplicity. It is not a negative simplicity, either, a simplicity of gewgaws eliminated and ornament excised, which, like that of a distressed object found in a barn, appeals by accident to modern eyes trained already in the joys of minimalism. No, their objects show a knowing, creative, shaping simplicity, and to look at a single Shaker box is to see an attenuated asymmetry, a slender, bending eccentricity, which truly anticipates and rivals the bending organic sleekness of Brancusi's "Bird in Flight" or the algorithmic logic of Bauhaus spoons and forks. Shaker objects don't look simple; they look specifically Shaker.

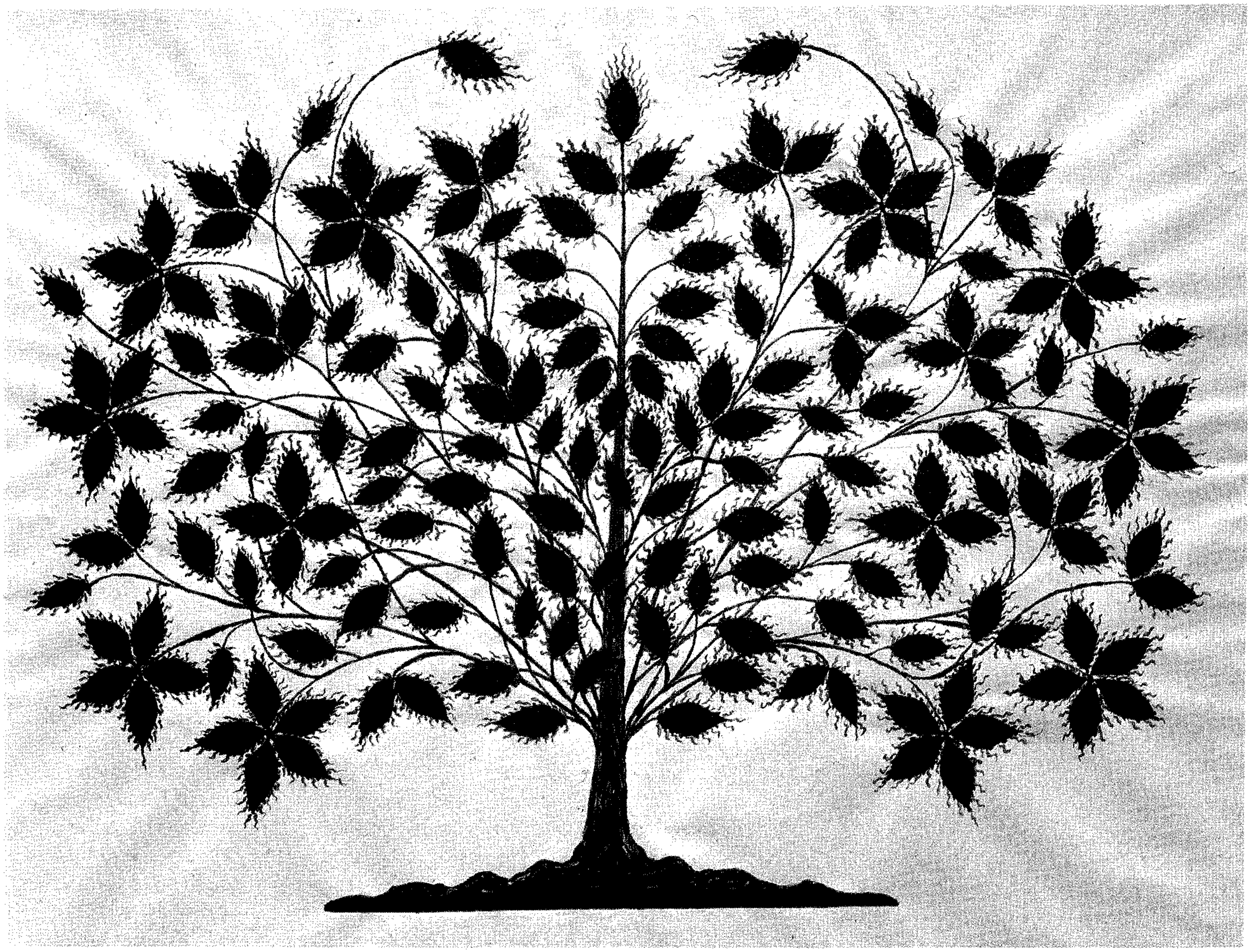
Yet what the Shakers thought they were doing when they made their boxes and ladders and clocks, and why we think what they did was so lovely, remains something of a mystery, despite a booming market and the books to go with it. How did a sect so small make objects so sublime? Did they know what they were doing when they did what they did? Or were they doing something else, and doing this other, better thing on their way there?

The Shakers' early inheritance is English, and began with a strange visionary figure, Ann Lee, born on Leap Day in 1736. She was a woman who, in her lifetime, travelled, so to speak, from the world of E. P. Thompson to the world of William James—from a poverty-stricken and embattled sectarian North of England millennial religion to the new world of American self-made faith. At a time when Manchester was slowly becoming the industrial hell that, a hundred years later, Engels reported it to be, she was reared with seven siblings in a hovel, and her more luridly Freudian biographers suggest that hearing her father impregnate her mother again and again left her with the revulsion toward sex that distinguished her faith from competing millennial visions. Illiterate, visionary, charismatic, she took part in the swirl of "enthusiastick" sects that emerged at the time, dissenting from the Anglican Church and expecting the Apocalypse; in fact, the name Shakers was given originally to a subset of the people we know as Friends, the Quakers. The Friends and the Believers—those following Ann Lee—seem to have been mixed up by the authorities, if not by themselves, into a porridge of dissenters.

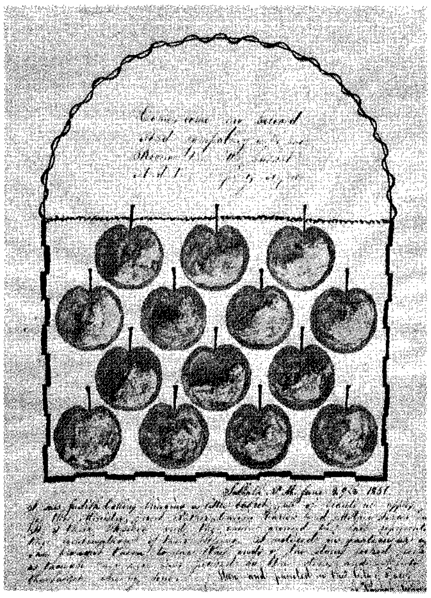
After a career as an amateur sermonizer, Mother Ann, as she was known, was thrown into prison, in 1772, for disrupting the Anglican Sabbath. There she had a vision that she was the second coming of Christ; she also began to believe that sex was the root of all evil. The idea had a genuine edge not so much of feminist rage as of women's pain: she had lost her four children to illness, and came of age in a working-class world in which constant pregnancy was a prime source of suffering. Her anti-sexual ethic was not so much anti-pleasure as anti-pregnancy.

In 1774, she and her husband and several followers emigrated to America and, after a brief stay in New York, formed a community just north of Albany. It was only then that the Believers began to emerge as a distinct cult with a distinct cult practice—a religious sect gathered around a single charismatic figure. People used to think that the Shakers recruited

THIS PAGE: PAUL ROCHELEAU; OPPOSITE: HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE



Left: cupboard with drawers (c.1825–1850). This page: "The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree" (1845) and "A Little Basket Full of Beautiful Apples" (1856), by Hannah Cohoon.



mostly from the poor and unhoused, eager for even a chaste roof to shelter under. It's now clear, though, that a cross-section of the American population, rich and poor and in-between, joined them, for the usual mixture of reasons. And a regular intake of orphans and abandoned children gave the Shaker colonies the slightly misleading appearance of family. (There was a regular intake, as well, of people who wandered in for food and shelter in inclement times—"winter Shakers," they were called.)

Mother Ann's early followers shared her belief that she was a reborn Christ. She represented the fulfilled and completed Christ—her presence made the Messiah now sexually complete, both man and woman. Her latter-day followers tried to tone down her messianic pretensions, but they were clear, and outlasted her life. In an 1827 letter (published in 1985 by Stephen J. Stein, a Shaker historian), a young Kentucky Shaker, William S. Byrd, of the famous Virginia Byrds, admits that many "scof at the idea of Christs making his second appearance in Ann Lee" but then adds defiantly, "The same Christ that dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth, appeared the second time in this female, the spiritual Mother of all the new creation of God." Much as St. Augustine lent some of his sense of guilt and morbidity to early Christianity, Ann gave her neurasthenic desire for order and hyper-organization to all the later Shakers. Crowded poor people learn to hate disorder with a passion that for the wealthy is only a pastime; Groucho Marx, to take another important American spiritual leader, was so appalled by the chaos of his tenement childhood that, it was said, for the rest of his life he hated to have one kind of food on his plate touch another. (Whenever we see a fanatic appetite for order, there were probably once six kids in one room.)

Ann Lee became wildly controver-

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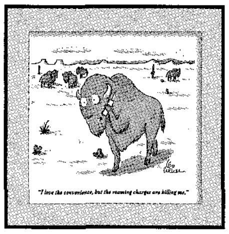
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sial, and was attacked several times—and once, it seems, sexually assaulted—by gangs of local men. One of these beatings may have been the cause of her sudden death, in 1784. It was left to her disciples, particularly Joseph Meacham and Lucy Wright, to organize the Believers into fully self-sustaining celibate but coed communities. They spread quickly, and through the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth the Shakers became American icons, establishing colonies in the Massachusetts towns of Pittsfield and Harvard, and then throughout New England and as far south as Kentucky. Still, even at their height, around 1840, the Shakers were never very many: perhaps five thousand true Believers altogether. During Ann's lifetime, the shaking of the Shakers was already legendary, not to say notorious: they would expunge the old Adam by evenings of violent dancing and rhapsodic writhing. After the establishment of the communities, the thing became more formalized: a regimented after-dinner trembling, like line dancing at a sock hop. But what the dancing represented—a sublimation of, rather than an invitation to, sex—was apparent, and undisguised, and attracted the attention of visitors from Thoreau to Charles Dickens.

So far, so weird. How did they begin to make beautiful things, and why did those things take the form they did? There is no straight line between belief and building. Both Quaker and Shaker styles came of age in the early nineteenth century, at the time of a general neoclassical revival throughout Europe and America, when linear, stripped-down, right-angle schematics were everywhere. If the Shakers were going to make objects at all, those were the kind of objects they would make; it's not as though they were imitating the Nymphenburg rococo in that other utopian colony down the road.

Yet the Shakers made specifically stylish things, where others didn't. As a fine recent anthology, "Quaker Aesthetics," has shown, the Friends, apart from a general tendency toward the plain and suspicion of the fancy, had no real style separate from that of their fellow-Americans. They wore more or less the same clothes and used the same furniture as everyone else. (They just disapproved of their own use of them more than other people did.) So why did the Shakers have a style of their own?

Most of the elements of Shakerism are common to orders and sects: the Dervishes whirled, Dominican monks renounced the flesh. What seems distinctive is, first, their feminism and its insistence on coed monasticism, which made much of the sexual while also denying it. Theirs was a genuinely radical feminism. Shaker communities, though not specifically matriarchal in rule—there were plenty of male elders, too—were among the few American communities of nearly perfect sexual equality. There is even a sense, perceptible in the letters and other writings, that this made a Shaker colony a welcome place for "effeminate" men—a surviving letter reveals a code of homoerotic innuendo that is as easy to decrypt as pig Latin.

What also distinguished the Shakers was their odd join between violent anti-worldliness and thoroughgoing commercial materialism. Monks and monkish communities have, of course, sold goods to the world for a long time, from medieval cheese to Moonie cappuccinos. But the Shakers, faced with the need to support large communities, worked particularly hard to manufacture things for money. Many of the objects that we think of as archetypally Shaker—the long oval boxes with their lovely triple folds, the clean brooms and chairs—were designed and made largely for outside sale. With most tribes and sects that we look to as artistic innovators, the line between cult object and commodity product—between the true African fetish and airport art—is, if often far from sharp, at least tenable. It wasn't with the Shakers. Shaker style was a commodity almost as soon as Shakerism was a cult. Contrary to Thomas Merton's romantic assertion that each Shaker chair was made as though no other chair had been made before, Shaker chairs and other wooden objects were made in semi-industrial conditions for a growing middle-class market.

It is here, ironically, in the need to make things to sell to other people, that the first stirrings of a distinct style begin. This is not to say that the objects were made insincerely, or that Shakerism in design was a scam. The built-in cup-boards and chairs and ladders constructed only for other Shakers, in Shaker communities, are made in the same spirit as the things for sale. The point is that no line was drawn the other way around, either: what was made for sale looked like what was made for sacred. The urge to make consumer goods is, after all, one of the keenest spiritual disciplines that an ascetic can face: it forces spirit to take form. An ascetic drinking tea from a cup decides not to care what kind of cup he's drinking from; an ascetic forced to make a cup has to ask what kind of cup he *ought* to drink from. By the mid-nineteenth century, "Shaker" had become a brand name.

Skeptics said that the work was a form of self-coerced indenture: the Shakers could make more objects more cheaply because, as one defense of the Shakers puts it, artisans "were free of distractions" and "freed from financial worries," and, as a critic would say, were not free (or chose not to be free) to sell their skills at their true value on an open market. As Michael Downing documents in a richly human book about American spirituality, "Shoes Outside the Door: Desire, Devotion, and Excess at San Francisco Zen Center," the Zen community in San Francisco in the nineteen-sixties and seventies similarly produced excellence and exhaustion in equal measure. The Zen community could draw on underpaid cooks to run the Greens restaurant as the Shakers could draw on unpaid artisans to make their clocks; the proportion between beatitude found and skill exploited was left to the maker to figure. The enterprise gave the Shakers a curious double existence as a scary sect and a solid brand. And the Shaker brand *was* gold. "When a man buys a kag of apple sass of you," the humorist Artemus Ward wrote approvingly, around the time of the Civil War, "he don't find a grate many shavins under a few layers of sass."

But if that helps explain why they made so many boxes, it doesn't explain what made the boxes so fine. Some insight into what the Shakers were doing and thinking comes from the rare occasions when they were making art objects properly so called—visionary drawings. These were produced when, from the eighteen-twenties to the eighteen-fifties—around the time of the Second Great Awakening—the Shakers, within their already spiritualized environment, went through a kind of spiritual reawakening of their own.

A spiritual reawakening within a community already drawn taut by spiritual aspiration must have created a strenuous atmosphere. Visions and ghosts came down, and the Shakers, chiefly women and young girls, made "gift drawings": the drawings were gifts from above, not gifts to another. For the most part, they are conventional folk art—except for several by a Shaker woman named Hannah Cohoon, who lived in the Hancock community, and who was a kind of Emily Dickinson of drawing. Her four surviving signed drawings show a concentration on a single form rather than a chatty, anecdotal all-overness, quite outside the normal round of folk art. One of them, "A Little Basket Full of Beautiful Apples" (1856), is among the key drawings in American art, with a tonic sense of abundance—all the apples just alike, each with its rub-on of rouge, like blush applied by an adolescent girl—allied to obsessive order. Another, the famous "Tree of Light or Blazing Tree" (1845), shows us a vision seen in a dream: a tree with each leaf embroidered with fire, part of the normal Shaker iconography of the tree of life but also alarming in its overcharged richness. Cohoon's intensity was concentrated not on transcendental images of saints or God but on homely American objects, picnic tables and baskets of apples.

This way of imbuing the ordinary with a sense of the numinous is at the heart of the Shaker aesthetic, by far the best extended account of which can be found in "The Shaker World: Art, Life, Belief," by the art historian John T. Kirk. Kirk argues that there are Shaker specificities, and that they reside in a series of simple design moves that are independent of the neoclassical run of the time, making a unique combination of slenderness, tenderness, and boxiness. Shaker ladders and chairs and tables tend, first of all, to be improbably long, attenuated. There was a practical reason for this: communal living demands long tables in large buildings. Things grow long naturally in dormitories. But practical necessity is always the lever of creation; the line between practical necessity and aesthetic impulse is not merely fine but nonexistent. (The last

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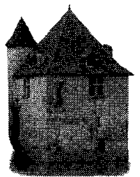

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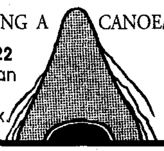

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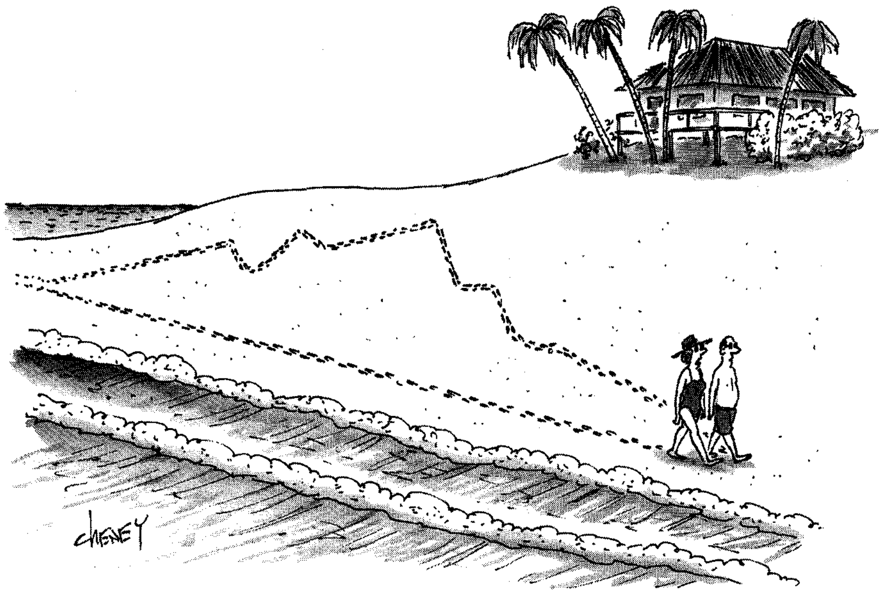
thing in the world Michelangelo wanted to paint was a ceiling. Once up there, he saw the celestial possibilities.) This constant attenuation—a pulling out of chair legs and table lengths—is one of the things that make Shaker design so seductive, in the most direct way. For attenuation in art inherently has two meanings: long, slender things are chic, as with every fashion model, and they are spiritual, as with the figures in Chartres or Blake's flamelike personages.

Shaker objects are also unusually repetitive: Kirk calls these Shaker formats "tight grids," and they infect everything the Shakers made, a last long lingering echo of Mother Ann's hatred of the collapsed and squalid mess of the one-room home. Everything in the Shaker world, from brooms to villages, is laid out in rows, grids, tightly packaged and formatted. (The insistence on the villages' grid planning was even formalized in the Shakers' "Millennial Laws" of 1821.) The grid plan of a Shaker village is unlike the seemingly similar neoclassical grid plan of, say, Quaker Philadelphia, where the regular spacing allows a rational calm to fall over the streets and squares. The plans for Shaker villages are, instead, tight and surprisingly asymmetrical, with long straight main streets and side streets that jog off abruptly at odd intersections; like Shaker furniture, Shaker plans can accept asymmetry if it is dictated by practicality. Shaker plans look less like something drawn up in an Enlightenment encyclopedia than like something sketched by a seer with an Etch A Sketch, lines sprouting and kicking out at odd but angular angles.

One sees the same principle—apparent rationality inflected with an underlying obsessiveness—in the prime Shaker objects. In an amazing mid-century case with cupboard and drawers made by the carpenters in the community in Enfield, Connecticut, two doors, above and below, mismatch, while two central drawers are broken up arrhythmically into smaller parts. It is like a cupboard in Morse code, stuttering out one half and two shorts. That Shaker box, similarly, bends around, and each element has a logic to it—the copper tacks to prevent rust, the beautiful embracing swallowtail fingers to keep the box from cracking—but it has none of the "that's that" shortcut simplicity of folk objects; instead, a kind of underlying delirium infects it, an obsessive overcharge of finish, the sense of a will to perfection investing an otherwise humdrum object. "Trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle" was a Shaker motto. "God is in the details"—but the details have to provide evidence of God.

The Shakers were ascetics without being Puritans. They didn't object to color and comfort, even as they rejected ornament and luxury. (Many of the objects that look ascetic to us have simply lost their original paint.) A wonderful chair in the Hancock village is made to lean back: a rocking chair without rockers, at perpetual tilt. Yet all these elements—the flat grid patterning, the acceptance of asymmetry, the tolerance for the drumbeat repetition of similar elements without an evident hierarchy of form—add up to a simple idea: Shaker design, while reaching toward an ideal of beauty, unconsciously rejects the human body as a primary source of form. To a degree that we hardly credit, everything in our built environment traditionally echoes our own shape: we have pediments for heads and claw and ball feet, and our objects proceed from trunk-like bases to fragile tops. Repetition and the grid are two alternatives to design that refers to classical perspective space and the roundly realized human body. They reappear in twentieth-century art through the Cubist desire to make playthings that snubbed their noses at perspective, and the Teutonic urge to make a new language of pure form. Once you have got rid of the body as a natural referent for design, and no longer think "pictorially" about objects, grids and repeats begin to appear as alternative systems, whether you are in Japan, Montmartre, or Hancock. The love of asymmetry, which seems to us so sophisticated, involves a violation of the same taboo, since symmetry is the essence of human beauty. All Shaker design implies a liberation from "humanism" of this kind. When we make objects that look like us, we unconsciously are flattering ourselves. The Shakers made objects that look like objects, and that follow a non-human law of design.

One sees the pattern clearly in the evolution of the casement clocks—what we call grandfather clocks—made by the



"Will you please try to get your mind off of the S. & P. Index?"

• •

Youngs family of New York over three generations, in and out of the community of Believers. The clocks of the elder Youngses, Seth and his son Benjamin, as described in Glendyne R. Wergland's "One Shaker Life," are in the manner of Greek columns, with strongly articulated bases, long shafts, and "heads" with clock faces. Over time, the clocks that Benjamin made became more narrowly "neoclassical": the bases simplified and their moldings reduced, the clock-head narrowed in size, the clock's lines made neater and more geometrical. But Isaac Newton Youngs, the grandson, was reared as a Shaker, and the clocks he made became as reductive as a refrigerator case, with the sides of the clock neither tapering nor swelling, and, telltale sign, with a knob on the clock face as well as on the clock body to allow the worker to adjust or repair the inside: the allergy to putting a functional element on an object's "face" was overruled, because the artisan was not thinking of it as a face. In each case, the clocks got not merely simpler—though they did that, too—but progressively less figural.

This doesn't mean that the Shaker objects are "inhuman" in the sense of being cold. They aren't cold. The brooms and clocks and boxes create an atmosphere of serenity, loveliness, calm certainty. But these are monastic virtues rather than liberal ones. We miss the radical edge of Shaker art if we don't see that it is not meant to be "humanistic." (As much as the Moonies ever have, Shaker communities worked hard to exterminate individuality: people dined together, slept together, and even, in Hancock, were buried together, in a single common grave marked "Shakers.") Most religious objects, from Baroque Catholic baldachins to Hindu temple ornaments, are worldly but immaterial, made with immense sophistication in order to make the ordinary physical world seem to vanish in a smoke cloud of spirals and twists and flames. Shaker objects are, like Zen Japanese ones, unworldly but material, far from sensuality but solid as a rock. They annihilate the body, and leave us timeless form to tell the time with.

The Shakers waned as swiftly as they rose, and by the early twentieth century they were as much a relic cult as a living force. They existed in order to be in decline: the Fall and the Paradise are about the same thing. (There is evidence that the Shakers themselves, even by the end of the nineteenth century, lived in conventional rooms with ordinary objects.) In this way, though, Shakerism—the enthusiasm of the Shaker design, and the accompanying cult of box and broom—is not merely a nostalgic invention. Rather, it has *always* been a nostalgic invention: the nostalgia was there almost before the experience happened. After their first

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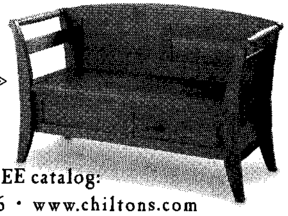

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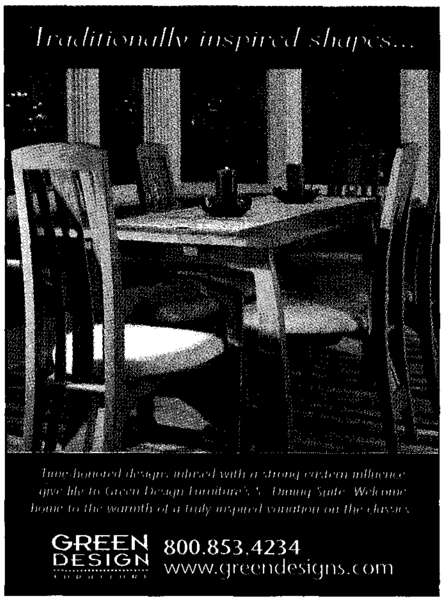
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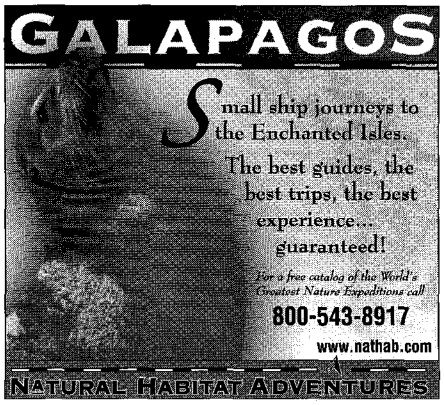
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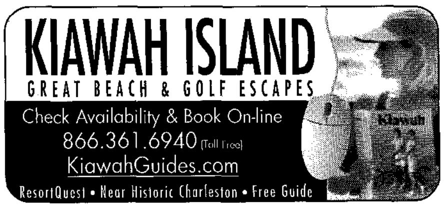
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blooming period, the Shakers existed to be remembered. But at the same time consumer-goods Shakerism, which led to catalogues of Shaker chairs, cloaks, and baskets, continued to accelerate, until Shaker shopping was a major occupation, and this is a phenomenon of the late nineteenth century, not the twentieth.

The Shakers, then, did not simply survive as a path to purity never pursued. Instead, they permanently defined a curiously American composition, played in the blue key of E: enlightenment, entrepreneurialism, and exploitation all in counterpoint, with a half-heard chord of illicit eroticism. The attempt to make monastic communities that will be simultaneously asexual, industrial, and fully integrated into the entrepreneurial society around them—that will do good and do well—is so deeply embedded in our history that it recurs again and again. As Downing documents, its latest incarnation has been the Zen experience—which is uncannily like the Shaker experience, and which also involved the implantation of a slightly misunderstood alien dogma, and an immense outpouring of American spiritual yearning, a taste for commercial prosperity on the part of its leaders, and an inability to figure out what the hell to do about sex. As the Shakers made a revolution in American objects, American Zen made a revolution in American cooking, giving vegetarian food dignity. And, when the communities went into crisis, first the plates, and then the food, were what was left.

We should, perhaps, feel disappointed by this descent from the spirit, but some of us may wonder if the spirit has greater gifts to give. Food and boxes are not ethically neutral; they radiate their own aura into the harried lives of people who own them, even if only as aspiration. They were elevated, not debased, to become bourgeois amenities; they passed from the realm of false belief to the realm of spiritualized form. A forthcoming book, "Selling Shaker: The Promotion of Shaker Design in the Twentieth Century," by Stephen Bowe and Peter Richmond, discusses, with a good deal of detailed analysis and some fine mordant humor, the slow process by which Shakerism continues to creep into the American marketplace, as Mother Ann's purities become the playthings of Oprah Winfrey. But a sneaking, not quite justifiable prejudice infects the study, in the authors' implicit belief that believing that Mother Ann was God and sex evil was intrinsically a higher-order activity than just liking to own Shaker boxes. This belief feels more Puritanical than Shakerian. Surely the aesthetic contemplation for other purposes of objects first made for cult use is more or less where the idea of art begins—the Shaker work counter in the hands of Oprah is, in this sense, not very different from the Renaissance altarpiece in the hands of Bernard Berenson—and, after all, Shakerism crept into the American marketplace by way of the American marketplace, where the Shakers placed it. In American art, the line between the goods and the good is a fine one, and doesn't benefit from being stared at too hard or cut too finely. In a commercial society, the membrane that separates spirit and store is always permeable.

Yet the blazing tree remains alight. Kirk ends his fine book with a slightly naïve inquiry into the relation between Shakerism and the objects of American minimalism, and shows that the formal elements of the two—the grid, the repeated element, the entire anti-humanism of the approach—rhyme if they do not repeat. Look-alikes aside, what most connects the minimal art of Judd and Serra and Stella with their very improbable predecessors is their fanaticism. The moderns are uncompromising, too: only this box now and now this box again. That same uncompromising fanaticism gives life to what might otherwise be mere Teutonic austerity and pedantic insistence. The violence done to natural form, and to the humanism it implies, creates a serene result with a perceptible violence just beneath.

American art benefits from the fanatic, as American writing does not: the visual arts threaten to disappear back into the big jumble of things we see and own unless they are marked by some kind of extremism. Writers may be Friends, but artists are Believers, or they are not much. The twin legacy of Shakerism is true to the twin roots of the Shakers' vision: they remain both as a model of wild-eyed and unreal renunciation and as makers of simple good things. The shining tree of life is a tree of light that illuminates the way for believers. It is also on fire, and can only be consumed. ♦

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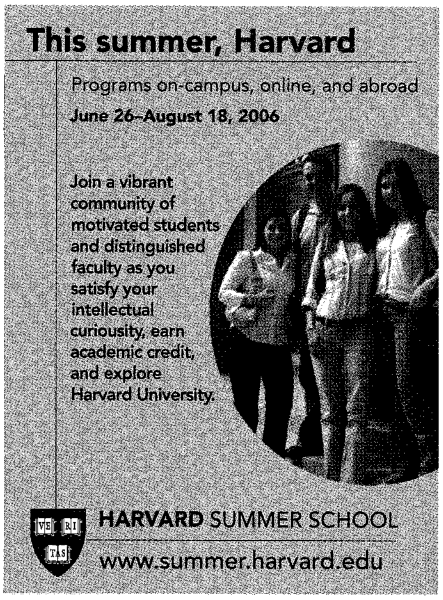

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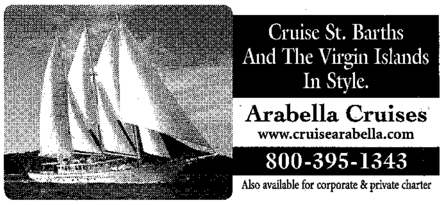

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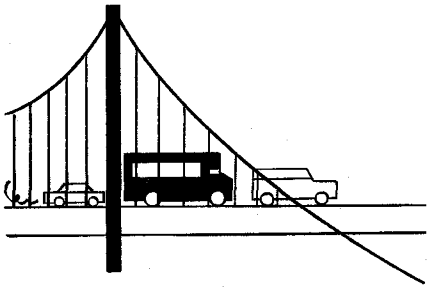
BRIEFLY NOTED

A Family Daughter, *by Maile Meloy (Scribner; $24)*. Continuing the family saga of her first novel, "Liars and Saints," Meloy's second follows Abby Collins from the age of seven, when her feckless mother and sober father separate, to her success as a young novelist. The kernel of the story is a melodrama involving her uncle Jamie, who rescues her first from the boredom of her childhood illness and then, later, from grief after the sudden death of her father. When a mutual sexual attraction develops, though, Abby must learn to rescue herself, which she does mainly by recasting the dilemmas of her extended family as a work of fiction. All this might easily come off as soap opera were Meloy not a wise and astonishing conjurer of convincing realities.

Queen of the Underworld, *by Gail Godwin (Random House; $24.95)*. The twelfth novel by Godwin, a three-time National Book Award nominee best known for her sharp women characters and Southern sensibility, is a disappointing attempt to recycle in fiction the youthful passion, determination, and self-doubt that she has written about with vitality in recently published journals. Emma Gant, Godwin's alter ego, is an eager young reporter just out of college, who lands at a Miami paper in 1959 and makes her way through a landscape populated by scheming journalists, Jewish mobsters, Cuban exiles, a schmalzy ex-beauty queen, and the former madam of an "elite island whorehouse." Unfortunately, Emma's flat first-person narration blanches even such an eclectic cast of characters of its native color.

Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt, *by Amanda Mackenzie Stuart (HarperCollins; $27.95)*. In 1895, on the eve of Consuelo Vanderbilt's marriage to the ninth Duke of Marlborough, the New York *World* published a concise reference chart: the bride, at eighteen years old, weighed a hundred and sixteen and a half pounds, had "delicately arched" eyebrows and a nose that was "rather slightly retroussé," and was heir to a twenty-five-million-dollar estate. She had no interest in the groom, but a British aristocrat, albeit a poor one, held irresistible appeal for Alva, her socially ambitious mother. Stuart's history marshals an impressive trove of primary documents, from newspaper accounts (the *Times* had a reporter assigned to cover bridesmaids) to letters and autobiographical writings. But her account, while impeccably researched, lacks psychological acumen. We learn that Consuelo—who gave the Duke the descendants he needed, divorced, and remarried—is credited with coining the phrase "an heir and a spare," but it's hard to tell what it might have meant to her.

Tugboats of New York, *by George Matteson (New York University; $39.95)*. In this illustrated history, Matteson, a twenty-year tugboat veteran, narrates two centuries of the city's history from the decks of its tugboats, whose fortunes "powered up with the rising tide of the nineteenth century and then powered back down with the efficiencies of the twentieth." The first boat in New York meant exclusively for towing entered service in 1828, but business was sporadic; her captain was "more likely to be found in the local saloon than at the helm." In 1871, a tugboat was lured up the Hudson to Sing Sing and shanghaied by escaped Tammany men, then chased by a flotilla of guards in rowboats, who finally ran it aground near Nyack. The peak of the tugboat era was 1929, when eight hundred of them plied the city's waters. Today, there are fewer than two hundred, which are used to dock larger ships, though a handful, Matteson notes elegiacally, still "trundle back and forth across the harbor on an indifferent schedule, carrying mostly Long Island garbage and incinerator ash to the mainland."



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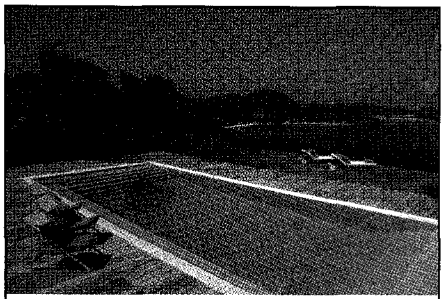

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POP MUSIC

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' new album.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

In July of 2004, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, a rock trio from New York City, opened for Devo, the new-wave group, in a show at the band shell in Central Park. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' 2003 début album, "Fever to Tell," had gone gold, a considerable achievement for a noisy and idiosyncratic band that lacks a bass player and has a sound that is sometimes thin and spiky. The group had sold half a million records, in part because the video for "Maps," a stirring love song that is as close as the band gets to a ballad, had become a staple on MTV2.

The Central Park gig was the trio's most high-profile to date in its home town. It had been raining, and clear plastic ponchos had been distributed to the audience, about three thousand people, some of whom shouted "Devo!" during the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' set. The band members were fighting the crowd, the weather, even their clothes. Under a poncho, Karen O, the lead singer, who is twenty-seven years old and long-legged, was wearing a leotard that looked like a stained-glass window and appeared to be a couple of sizes too small. Eventually, Karen O (her last name is Orzolek) removed her poncho and tied it protectively around her waist while she romped around the stage, hollering and throwing her hands in the air. It was a typical performance for her: simultaneously aggressive and vulnerable. And, like everything the Yeah Yeah Yeahs do, the show was both off-kilter and mesmerizing.

"Show Your Bones," the group's second full-length album, which will be released in March, is a testament to its ingenuity. Karen O and her bandmates—Brian Chase, the drummer, and Nick Zinner, the guitarist—put primitivist graphics on their album covers and appear with bands, like the Liars and Black Dice, who think noise is its own reward. But beneath the art-rock trappings the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are pop musicians. Theirs is a slightly scruffy version of pop, made with cheap instruments and Karen O's surreal lyrics, but their songs—like their performances—have all the traits of Top Forty hits: economy, momentum, personality, and pleasure. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs value joy over indie credibility, and they want to be catchy. (The group's albums are each less than forty minutes long, and its other two releases are brief EPs.)

Chase, a compact, bespectacled young man, who attended Oberlin College with Karen O, is one of rock's most satisfying drummers; he is capable of complicated polyrhythms but rarely plays anything fussy. Zinner, who played in a duo with Karen O before they formed the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, is fine-featured and rail thin, with a nest of black hair and a talent for writing elegant, howling guitar motifs that often echo, but never overwhelm, her singing. Both men need to be this good to hold their own against Karen O, whose fearsome charisma would have made her a success had she appeared with nothing more than a microphone and a pair of maracas. She stalks the stage, plants her feet wide apart, pours beer on herself, and flings equipment around with no apparent regard for whom she might hit. (On the band's Web site, she is depicted breathing fire, with one foot resting on an enormous cartoon rabbit.) Her outfits, which are made by her friend the designer Christian Joy, are a jumble of kindergarten and runway: short, shiny skirts worn with Converse high-tops, ripped fish-net stockings, and, on at least one occasion, a Wonder Woman-style capelet. Karen O's voice lacks the power of Björk's, but she is as versatile a performer. Sometimes she sounds like a barroom country singer; at others, like an Eastern European folk-singer, or a ditzy pop star.

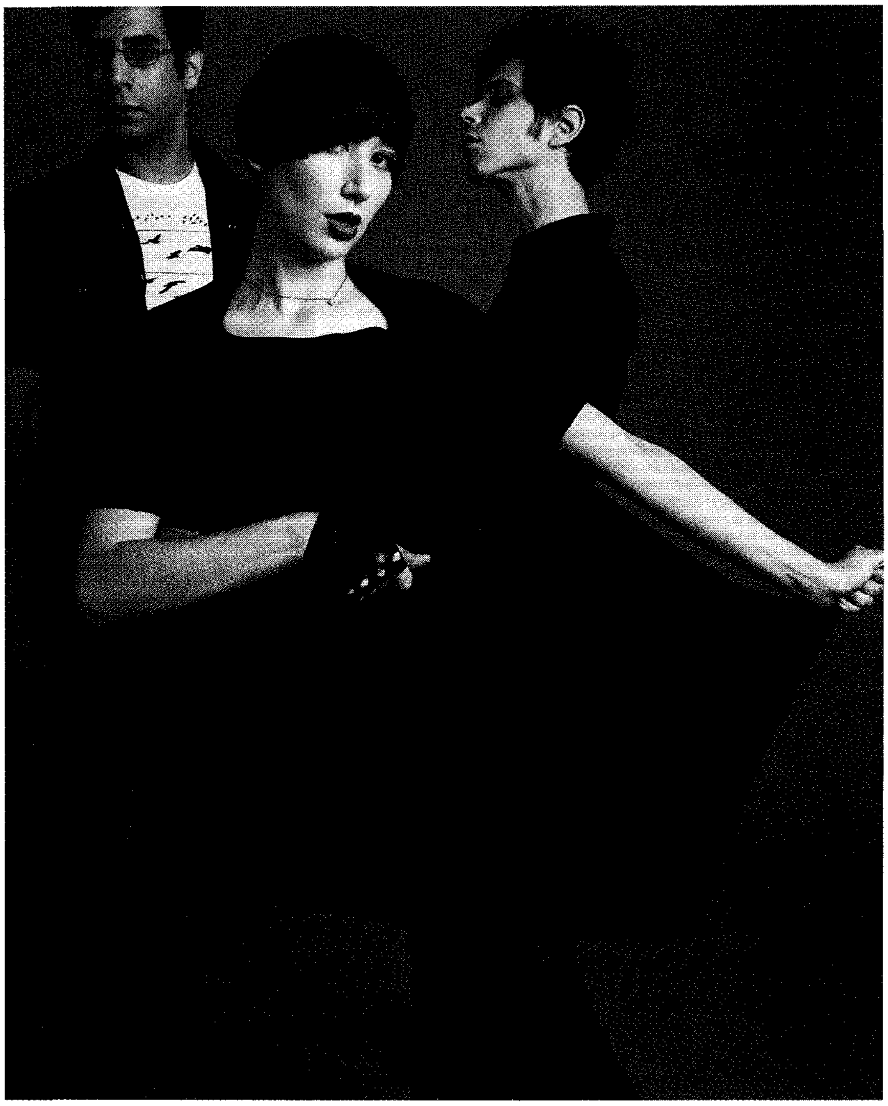
The Yeah Yeah Yeahs played their first show in 2000, opening for the White Stripes at the Mercury Lounge. The following year, they recorded a five-song EP, which they released themselves. It quickly became popular, and was re-released by the respected indie label Touch & Go. One track, "Art Star," is a gleeful parody of the art world. "I've been working on a piece that speaks of sex and desperation," Karen O deadpans, boasting, "I got a dealer in Tokyo. I got a rep in Paris. I got an agent in Cologne. Shit, I got a gallery in New York!" The chorus consists of her screaming "Art star!" for a very long time, as if she were being electrocuted. Just before you reach to turn the howling off, she does so herself, chiming, "*Doot doot doot doot, doot di-doot di-doot.*" (Perhaps the art star has overcome her anxiety attack and is skipping down the street to the bank.)

The song that seemed to stick with people, though, was "Our Time," which begins with a primal drumbeat common to girl-group songs from the sixties; it sounds like the opening of the Ronettes' "Be My Baby," only slowed down a bit. Karen O sings about what could be a romance gone bad—"I've been sunk by your lies, and my heart, baby, is cold and blue"—but in the chorus the words become more ambiguous: "It's our time, sweet babe, to break on through. It's the year to be hated, so glad that we made it." Is she talking to her lover? Or to her bandmates, imagining that the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are on the verge of becoming big enough to be resented? Karen O understands that rock lyrics aren't necessarily better when they're clearer.

"Gold Lion," the first single on "Show Your Bones," is more like a traditional rock song than much of the band's previous work. The opening measures are unexpectedly generic, consisting of a simple beat, basic acoustic guitar chords, and a mysterious phrase: "Gold lion's gonna tell me where the light is." But soon the drums become commanding, and the echoey, growling guitar parts stack up, one after another, until the music reaches a cacophonous peak. Karen O is making poetic promises. "We'll build a fire in your eyes," she says, before breaking into a girlish "*ooh, ooh,*" as the guitar whines like a violin being played over a walkie-talkie. The next song, the gentle and plangent "Way Out," borrows liberally from R.E.M., Sonic Youth, and Nirvana, which is a sign of confidence; the Yeah Yeah Yeahs know that no one will mistake them for anyone else, however much they plunder the past.

The entire record seems hopeful. It is rife with cheery catchphrases—"we're just another part of you," "good things happen in bad towns"—and tremulous guitar parts. "Phenomena," one of its most exuberant songs, is destined to be remixed as a dance tune. The beat is heavy, and Zinner switches between robust metallic riffs and hollow, spooky oscillations. In the chorus, Karen O sings, "Something like a phenomenon"—a lyric lifted from Grandmaster Flash's "White Lines," which is based on a classic eighties dance track, Liquid Liquid's "Cavern." In the next breath, she modifies the phrase to "Something like an astronomer."

In the chorus of "Cheated Hearts," a gorgeous, yearning track that could become the album's big hit, Karen O sings one phrase over and over in a crescendo: "I think that I'm bigger than the sound." The band responds with a convincing eruption of noise, elegantly belying her claim. The moment neatly captures Karen O's appeal: in her recordings and in her live performances, she satisfies the audience's need for a star while allowing us to see the ordinary person struggling with that role. "It's important for kids to feel bigger than they usually do," Karen O told me. "We're trying to make you feel a little bit cooler than you might actually be." Kids listening to "Show Your Bones" will recognize the insecurity she describes, and feel it drain away. ♦



The band values joy over indie credibility. Photograph by Yelena Yemchuk.

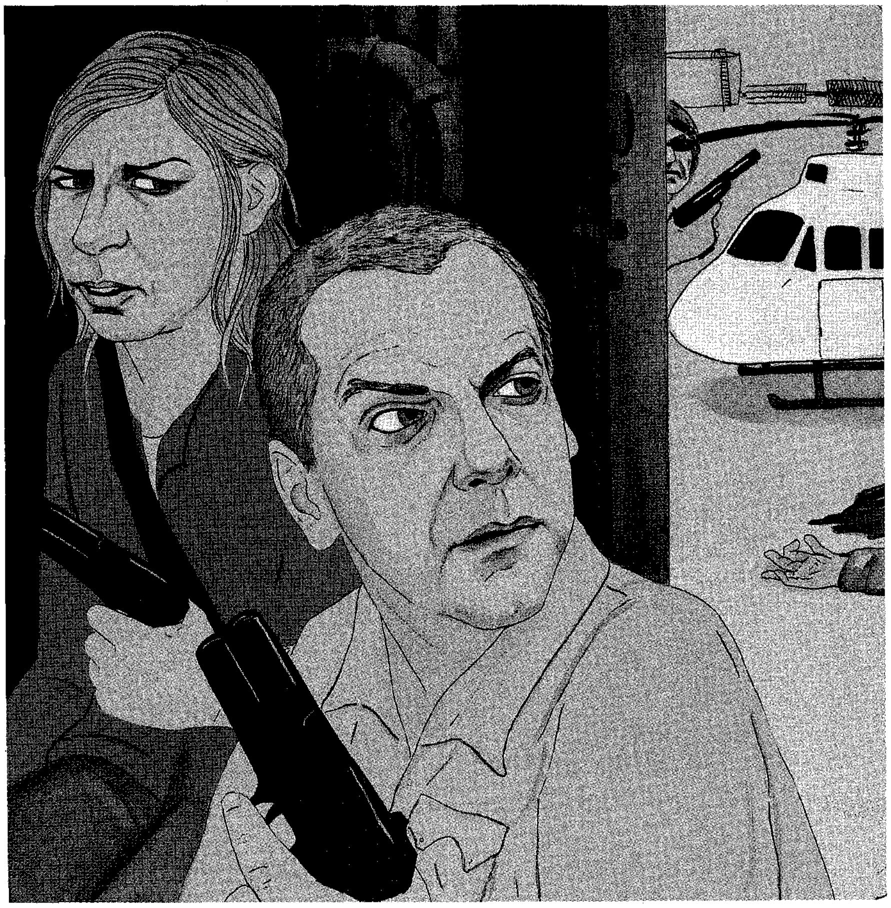
ON TELEVISION

BAUER POWER

A new day dawns on "24."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

When "24" débuted, on Fox, in November of 2001, it was seen as a risky venture; no one had a clue whether the show would hold viewers' interest for a whole season—a season of twenty-four episodes, in which events unfold in real time over the course of one day—or whether, even if it did maintain an audience, the idea would turn out to have enough going for it other than novelty to make it worth renewing. Well, it all worked out. "24" began its fifth season last month, as entertainment shows and fan sites trumpeted "Jack's back!" to signal the return of Kiefer Sutherland's federal counter-terrorism agent Jack Bauer. For me, this meant embarking on my yearly task of trying to hide the fact that I didn't watch "24." People I know talk about this show more than any other, and they don't just tell me that they watch it; they tell me *how* they watch it. One friend has seen every episode as it aired—which in the days of DVDs and video-on-demand and DVRs bespeaks an adherence to the old ways of viewing that is almost freakish. Some people didn't watch it at all until they happened to rent the DVDs of the first season and found themselves watching the whole thing in one weekend. (In DVD form, the series could be called "17," since that's how many hours a season runs without commercials; still, that's a lot of couch time for a weekend.) One friend's next-door neighbor calls her the second the show is over to discuss it. Couples make dates to watch it together.



Mary Lynn Rajskub and Kiefer Sutherland take on terrorism in Los Angeles.

LARA TOMLIN

But sometimes a TV show's main selling point is the very thing that can keep a person from watching it. I resented the implicit requirement that one watch every episode of "24," in order. And the show began only two months after September 11th; at that time, watching a thriller with a cliffhanger at the end of every episode and a story line involving the attempted assassination of a Presidential candidate—and, in the first episode, a plane being blown out of the sky—was not on my to-do list. But "24" is a phenomenon, and a growing one; so, after four years as a fugitive from the law of popular opinion, I decided to stop running. At the start of several episodes in the first season, Bauer tells us, "Today is the longest day of my life." In late January, I set about watching a hundred and two episodes of "24." It was the longest week of my life.

Of course, there is more to "24" than its concept, and in fact only in the first season did time really seem to be running out. After that, the threats were both broader and more terrifying—nuclear, biological, chemical—and they hit home in a different way. Four of the first season's episodes were shot before September 11th, but, since the second season, the show has consistently taken into account our national fears. ("24" 's creators, Robert Cochran and Joel Surnow, started out with the idea for a show that would unfold over twenty-four hours, and then tried to figure out what kind of job or event would call for someone to be up that long. They have said that they begin each season with only about a third of it mapped out, so it's probable that by now, after six episodes of the current season have aired, the show's writers are keeping Jack Bauer hours.)

Bauer and his superiors at the Counter Terrorist Unit in Los Angeles find themselves perpetually at the crossroads of urgency and ethics. From the very beginning, in instances too numerous to mention, "24" has forced viewers to conduct a debate with themselves that is similar to the one in Congress last year over John McCain's amendment to a defense bill, banning "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment" of detainees. If you had in hand a suspect who was almost certainly involved in a plot to set off a nuclear device or release a weaponized virus in a few hours, and that suspect refused to talk, what would you do? Such quandaries present themselves at the highest levels, too: the President of the United States, David Palmer (Dennis Haysbert), who based his campaign on the principles of "integrity, commitment, and, above all, honor," resorts, without much hesitation, to having a little electricity experiment performed on his national-security adviser, who has lied to him but is such a smoothie that unless he's given a jolt of juice he'll never reveal his secrets. (This role is played by Harris Yulin, one of the many wonderful actors who have come and gone on "24." Another is William Devane, who played the Secretary of Defense in season four. This season, Gregory Itzin plays President Charles Logan, a paranoid and arrogant weakling, and the terrific Jean Smart is his unstable but canny wife. Seeing these old hands playing old hands—there's nothing better.) However, when it comes to killing, of which there is plenty—it sometimes seems as though the show's title referred to the number of bodies that pile up in each episode—there's no point in having a debate with yourself. As in most thrillers, it's kill or be killed.

"24" works on us a little like a homeopathic treatment, helping us fend off, we hope, what we're most afraid of these days. If we see Jack's daughter kidnapped but then rescued, or a nuclear bomb safely detonated in the desert instead of in Los Angeles, maybe that will ward off disaster in our own lives. (By the way, judging by the soundtrack of "24," when a nuclear bomb does go off the accompanying music will sound something like Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings. Good, because Pachelbel's Canon is *so* 1990.) It's not that simple, though; there are not many happy endings, or middles, in "24." Viewers were shocked, after all they had been through, by the murder of Jack's wife by a C.T.U. mole at the end of the first season. The series hasn't flinched from showing the toll that Jack's job takes on his life, and on the lives of his colleagues at C.T.U., even the computer jockeys, who are generally in less danger than a field agent like Jack.

Kiefer Sutherland, who at thirty-nine looks both boyish and mature, is terrific in "24"; as he himself has said, it's the role of a lifetime. Torn between duty to his country and duty to his family, he's focussed and always on the move, trying to shake the cloud of existential doom that hangs over him. Like most of the actors in "24," he does a lot with little dialogue. Having found some measure of happiness with a new woman after leaving the unit, he's pulled back in because he's needed: no one else gets the job done the way Jack does. You can actually see the moment when he realizes that his new relationship is going to fail because of his work; he's just driving his car—nothing is said—and if you turn away for a second you miss the look on his face. It's lonely and desolate, sort of the way Los Angeles itself is in the show.

There's a tremendous sense of isolation in "24." The writing and the directing are stripped down and stark, as is the concrete-and-glass interior of C.T.U. There's little time for tenderness, even between couples, and no time for lingering of any kind; nobody at C.T.U. is sitting around playing Nerf basketball. (The one character who has some real language to work with is the scheming wife—and, later, ex-wife—of President Palmer, played by Penny Johnson Jerald, who is given slow-cooked, theatrical lines befitting a villainess of the Alexis Carrington school. It's a completely nutty part.) And yet we come to know some of the characters well, especially the computer whizzes Chloe and Edgar (Mary Lynn Rajskub and Louis Lombardi), both of them appealing and highly gifted oddballs, she maladjusted and obsessive, and he overweight and awkward. Even characters we don't like can touch us as time goes on. Watching the series the way I did, I tended to notice annoying repetitions; it seemed to me that Jack whispered "We'll get through this" to his daughter, Kim (Elisha Cuthbert), at least five times in every episode she was in, and that almost every bit of Jack's dialogue was rendered first in an intense whisper and then in an angry shout, as in "Where is the bomb? I said, 'WHERE IS THE BOMB'!" (The second line is always said with Jack's gun thrusting closer to the other guy's head.) Also, just in case you didn't pick up the tip in season one about cutting off a dead person's thumb so that you can use it on the electronic-identification pad at his office, you see it again in season four. Serious as "24" is, it's a lot of fun, too; fans love to post body counts and implausibilities and share Jack talk online. There is also one element of high comedy in "24": the computers always work. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

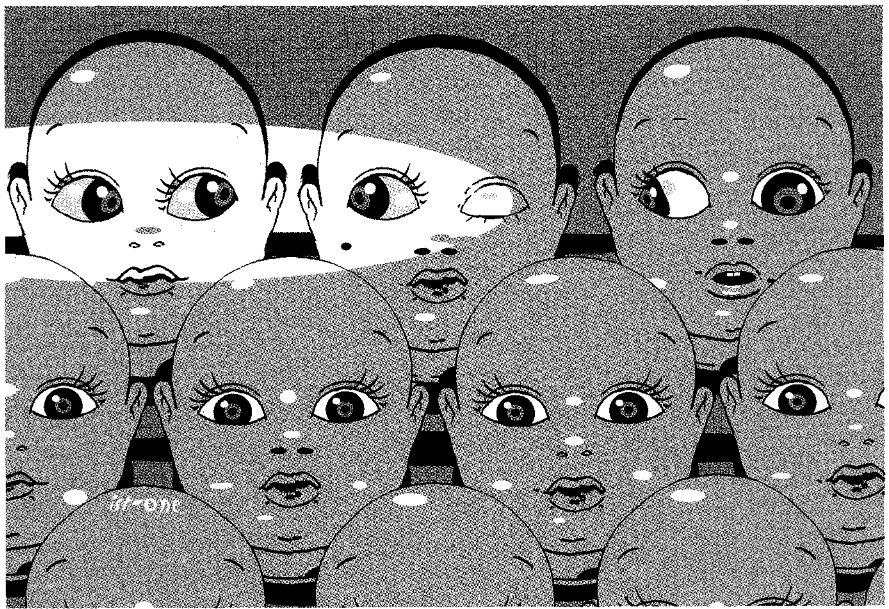
HOME AND ABROAD

"Bubble," "Neil Young: Heart of Gold," "Tristram Shandy."

BY DAVID DENBY

Steven Soderbergh is one director who says out loud what other Hollywood directors may be saying under their breath—that the studio system of making movies is broken and should be rethought, that there has to be another business model for marketing culture than the one that has dominated big Hollywood for the past twenty years or so. Soderbergh's apparent assumption is that the new technologies have, for the moment, outstripped creativity but that the situation is remediable. He believes that exhibitors and distributors, in return for a greater percentage of the rewards, need to share more of the risk of production costs; and his own practice suggests that he thinks established directors, as well as young independent filmmakers, should be willing to work small. Soderbergh will continue to make big-budget movies, but he has also entered into an agreement with Todd Wagner and Mark Cuban's company, HDNet Films, to make six low-budget pictures in high-definition video and to release the films simultaneously in theatres, on cable TV, and on DVD. "Bubble," which cost a million six hundred thousand dollars, is the first movie made under this arrangement.

"Bubble"—one might as well admit it immediately—is strange and off-putting, and hard-nosed types in the film business will no doubt dismiss it as a nothing. But, even if "Bubble" hasn't brought down the Bastille, the movie is far from nothing. Based on a screenplay by Coleman Hough, "Bubble" is about work, jealousy, and murder in a depressed factory town—the kind of nowhere place in which the question "What are you doing?" is usually answered by something like "Not much. Just hanging out." Misery gathers in the hollows of the demoralized talk. But the filmmakers' story, which gains strength slowly, comes to a climax in an abrupt moment of violence, and, in the end, "Bubble" leaves one impressed by its crabby, unyielding vision of an America suffocating in banality. And that impression wouldn't be nearly as substantial if it weren't for a technological breakthrough that, in the future, and in a cheerier project, could prove to be momentous.



Steven Soderbergh's "Bubble" takes place in a factory that manufactures baby dolls.

ISTVAN BANYAI

I saw "Bubble" in a theatre, and the first thing I noticed is how clear and sharply focussed the wide-screen image was. In this low-budget picture, Soderbergh used the same Sony digital cameras that George Lucas used when shooting the recent "Star Wars" films, and the registration of detail is astonishing. Digital imagery doesn't breathe the way film imagery does: blocks of color feel a little congealed, the flesh tones almost too smooth. But it would be downright Ludditic to say that digital doesn't possess special qualities of its own. The focus is not only sharp; it's sharp deep into the shot, at distances of thirty feet or more from the camera, and under minimal light conditions. But there's more at stake than technique. In the nineteen-fifties, the French film theorist and critic André Bazin wrote a series of influential articles on the history of film language in which the commonplace photographic measure of depth of field assumed an almost moral importance. In the Russian silent movies, and in the American cinema of the thirties, depth of field—the amount of the frame that was in sharp focus—was generally shallow, and filmmakers used lighting and editing to direct our attention to the most significant part of the action; the rest was blurry, mere background. As Bazin noted, however, such directors as Orson Welles, in "Citizen Kane," and William Wyler, in "The Little Foxes," both working with the cinematographer Gregg Toland, greatly expanded depth of field—expanded it so much that the audience was suddenly free to direct its gaze to the foreground or the middle distance. It could follow an actor as he moved through the set or not. Deep focus, Bazin said, liberated the spectator from the coercion of montage. What, then, would Bazin have made of Soderbergh's use of high-definition digital, in which absolutely everything is in focus?

Working in Ohio, near the West Virginia border, Soderbergh cast local people—non-actors—in all the parts. Kyle (Dustin Ashley), a good-looking but nearly silent young man, works in a factory that makes spooky-looking baby dolls. Day after day, he pours flesh-toned liquids into molds, then pulls out hardened plastic limbs. At lunch hour, he sits in the canteen with his fellow-worker Martha (Debbie

Doebereiner), a chubby fortyish redhead who is haplessly, mutely in love with him. Their uneventful friendship is interrupted by the arrival of Rose (Misty Wilkins), a slender and pretty girl but a user and a thief. At first, watching these non-actors is a little rough. A trained actor can perform in an affectless way that nevertheless holds our interest with small gestures and glances; a non-actor just goes flat, and in "Bubble," in those lunchroom scenes, the conversation is so dreary you can almost hear the hum of the fluorescent lights. Yet Soderbergh's use of the new technology makes this situation work. In many scenes, the characters stay planted in the middle distance surrounded by the things of their life—the chairs and tables in the canteen, the looming machinery, the cheap wood panelling at home that looks as if it had been laid on like wallpaper. When the material world has this kind of clarity and weight, the people trapped in it become more interesting and sympathetic: the mediocrity of their surroundings, we think, has taken their souls. No wonder they turn violent—violence is at least an act, a protest. This may be no more than a conceit—one happily opinionated character would break it up—but "Bubble," as you're watching it, makes a grim kind of sense. To use Bazin's terms, deep focus gives us the freedom to observe the characters' unfreedom. I can't see any reason, however, that happier moods than Soderbergh's can't be wrung from high-definition digits. Soderbergh has begun the revolution, and it's up to others to make the zeroes and ones sing like angels.

Even for a sixty-year-old country rocker, Neil Young has been through a lot, so one of the nice things about the concert film "Neil Young: Heart of Gold" is that this artist appears to have found something close to contentment. Surrounded by old performing friends like Emmylou Harris and Ben Keith, and with his wife, Pegi, standing beside him and singing, he gives the impression of having proved whatever he wanted to prove; he has worked through many memories, griefs, and fears, and arrived not at the end but, perhaps, at acceptance of the end. Or so it seems. Surely the genesis of the film suggests an intentionally valedictory myth. Last winter, informed that he had a brain aneurism, Young quickly wrote and recorded a bunch of new songs—the album released as "Prairie Wind." In the spring, an operation for the aneurism went well, and Young, after recovering, gave two concerts in August at the old Ryman Auditorium, in Nashville, events that the director Jonathan Demme attended, camera crew in tow. Young performs the "Prairie Wind" series and some older songs, too—mostly lyrical ballads in gentle country-rock style, richly scored with backup guitars, dobro, horns, and sometimes strings or groups of singers. The sound is enveloping and deeply satisfying without being challenging in any way. The lyrics are devoted to old friends and performers, to his dad, to life as a dream that may no longer be recoverable. Indeed, "if you follow every dream you might get lost." Over the years, Young has known a lot of people who got lost; that he has repeatedly found himself is a thought that now inspires little more than muted, rueful celebration.

Demme keeps the cameras right in front of the performers, and he avoids the stale rock-concert ecstasy of swooping and swivelling and shooting into the lights. Nothing in this movie is aggressively sold; nothing in it is intended to change your life. The attitude is "Take it or leave it—this is what Neil Young *is*." Ignoring the audience in the hall, Demme concentrates on the music and the lyrics and the relations between Young and members of the band—sometimes just a nod, a smile, a raised eyebrow. Since the sound is unusually clear as well as full, one can actually hear the lyrics in all their mournful near-poetry. One might call "Neil Young: Heart of Gold" soothing, even becalmed, but mellowness and ripeness, when they exist at this high level of craft, should have their season, too.

Laurence Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," completed in 1767, has been called an unfilmable book, but what may not be widely known, except among suffering English majors, is that "Tristram Shandy" is also an unreadable book. In 1776, Dr. Johnson said, "Nothing odd will do long. 'Tristram Shandy' did not last." Johnson's characterization was correct, his historical judgment wrong; he underestimated the desperation of graduate students. Michael Winterbottom's "Tristram Shandy: A Cock & Bull Story" is a movie about a film crew trying to make a movie of "Shandy," and what we see onscreen, with its antic interjections, its strenuous irrelevancies, its attempted sardonicism, is certainly in the spirit of Laurence Sterne. Unfortunately, it's also maddeningly repetitive, and dependent on the kind of strained English whimsy that leaves your throat sore from laughter that dies in the glottal region. One trouble with the current vogue for meta-cinema is that its practioners, such as Winterbottom and Charlie Kaufman, underestimate the extraordinary difficulty of telling a good story straight. ♦

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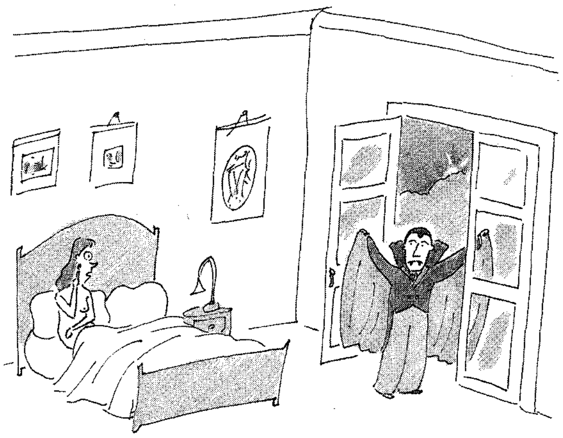
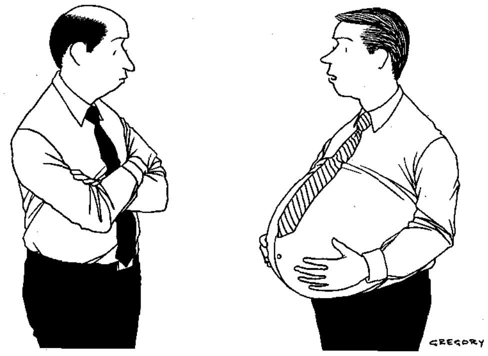
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by J. B. Handelsman, must be received by Sunday, February 19th. Finalists in the January 23rd & 30th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 6th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I bet the bride of Frankenstein gets to cuddle."
Doak Sergent, New York City



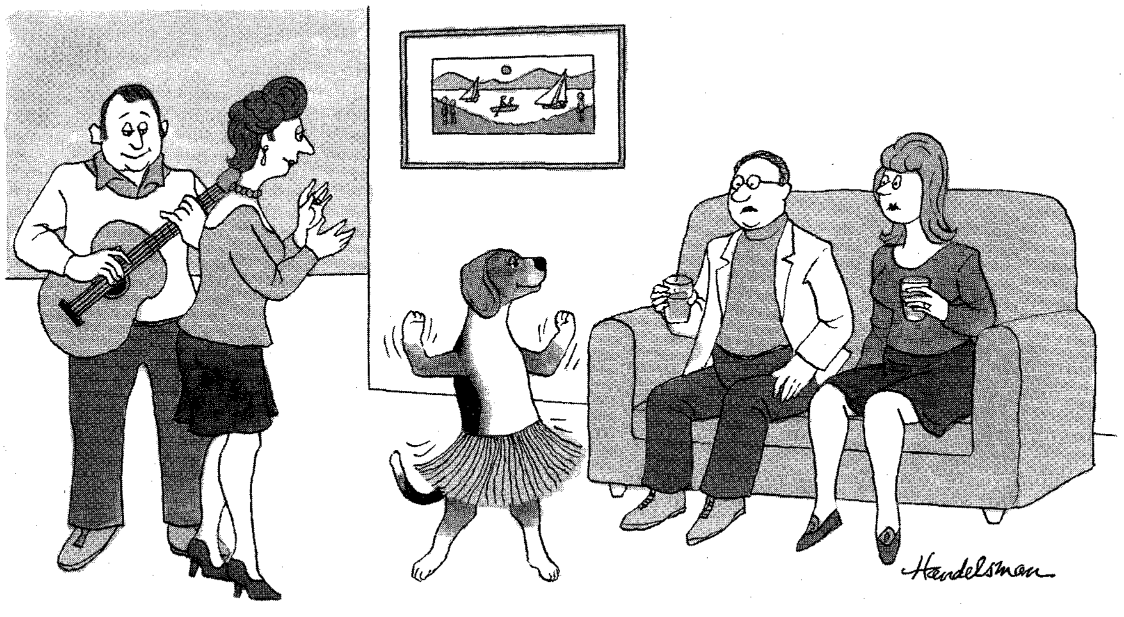
THE FINALISTS

"She told me she had protection."
Ward Campbell, Sacramento, Calif.

"The ultrasound says it's a keg of Bud Light."
Jude Person, Conception, Mo.

"No one expects an immaculate conception until it happens to him."
David Bergheim, San Diego, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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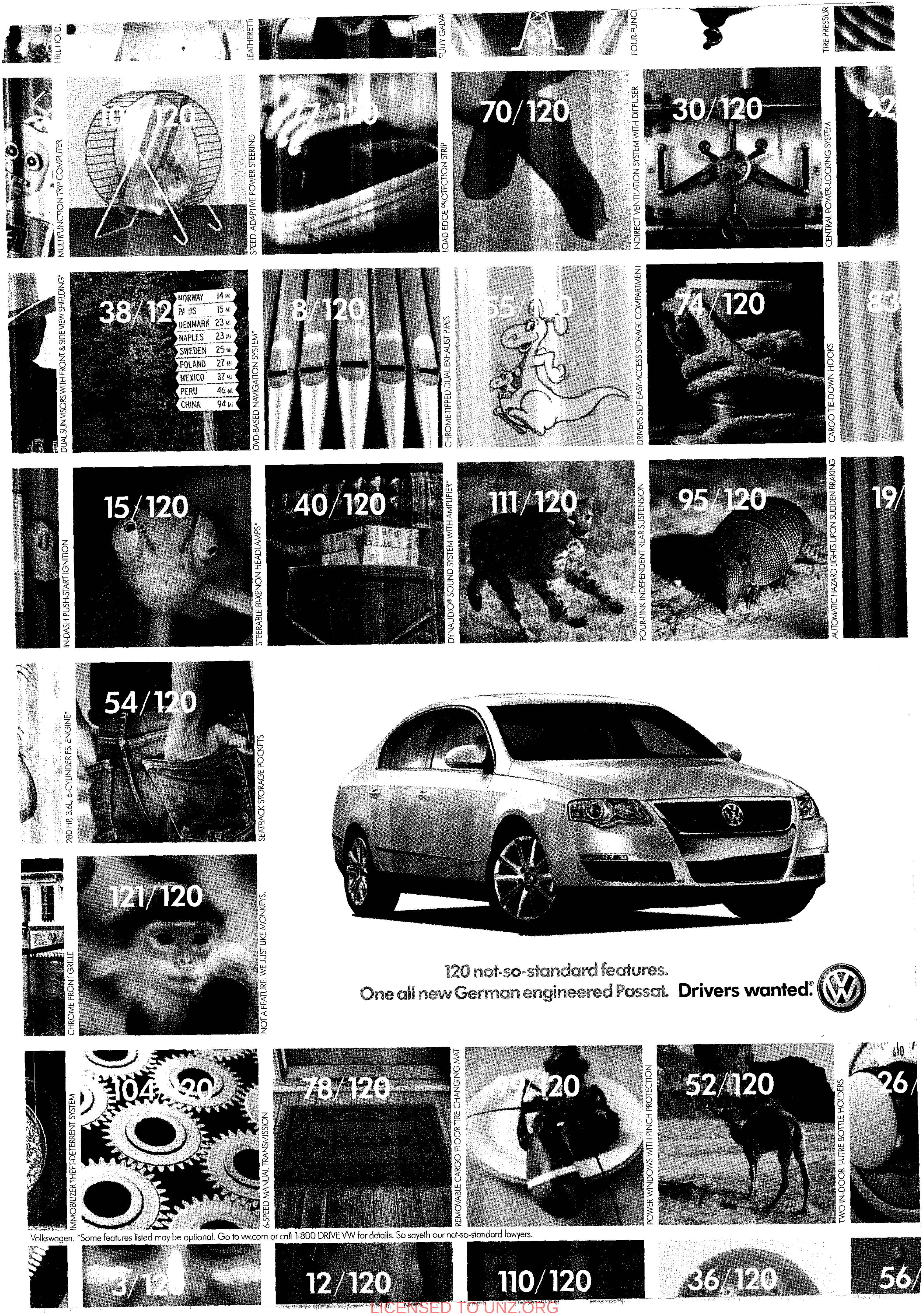
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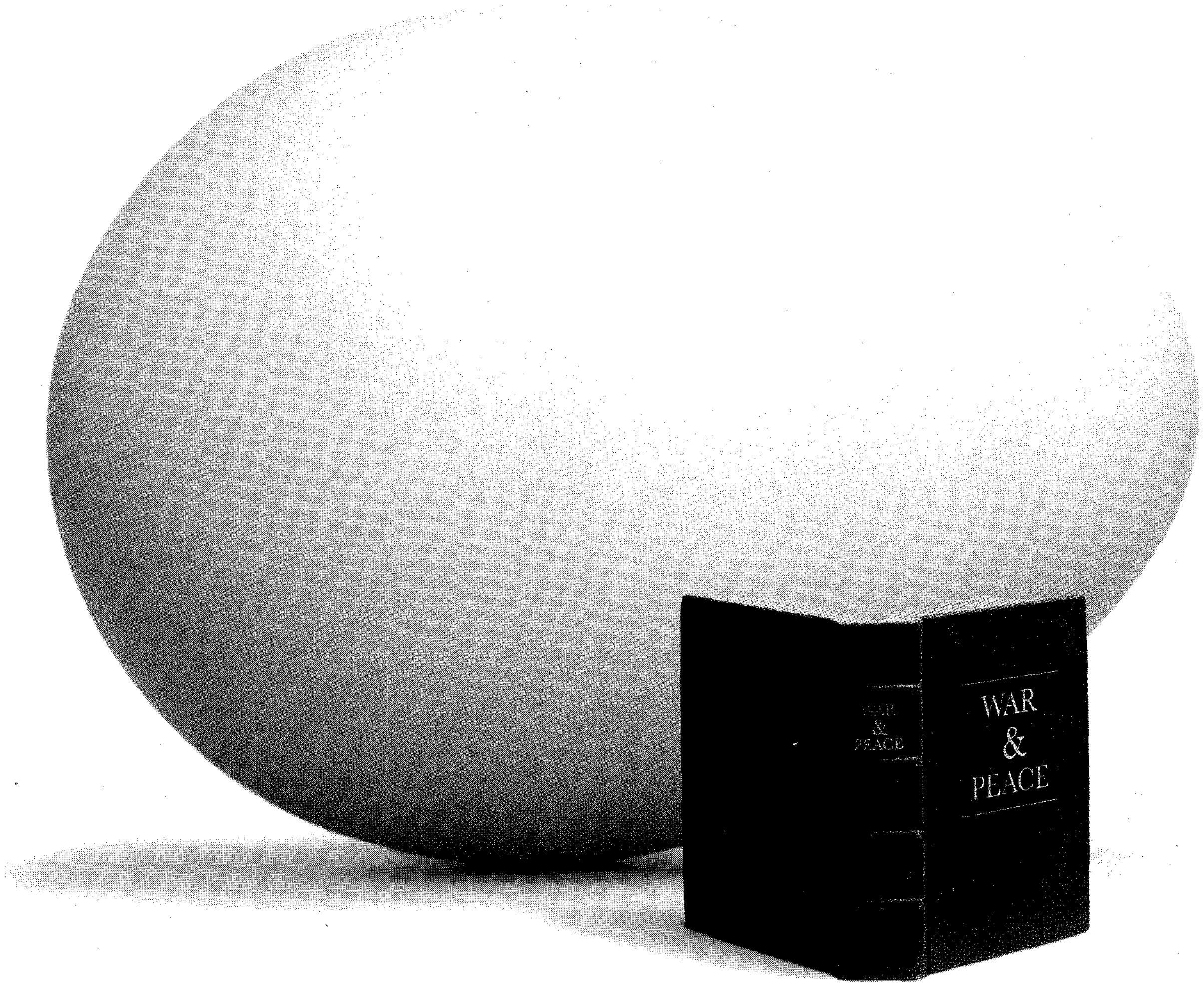

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